

# America

SEPTEMBER 2022

THE JESUIT REVIEW OF FAITH AND CULTURE

## An Open Mind and an Open Heart

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## For the Greater Glory

Of the many changes we have made here at **America** in the last decade, among my favorites is the travel and pilgrimage program we launched for our readers, listeners and viewers. And of all the places we journey to together, my favorite is the Basque region of Spain, where we follow the path of St. Ignatius Loyola, a co-founder of the Jesuits. It's one of the most beautiful places on earth, imbued with old world charm and world-renowned hospitality. Though I knew the story of Ignatius long before I first visited Spain, it was not until I literally walked in his footsteps that I came to really know the man.

Many of you probably know the story of St. Ignatius Loyola, whose feast day we celebrated in July—how an ambitious, vainglorious young man in the service of the king found himself in 1521 leading the defense of Pamplona against the most powerful army in Europe; how he refused to surrender in the face of the most desperate odds; how a cannonball shattered his leg as his army collapsed. You may have heard about how Ignatius was carried back to Loyola—for two excruciating weeks over mountainous terrain—to his ancestral home, where, while recovering from his wounds, he had a “conversion” experience while reading the *Life of Christ* and the *Book of the Saints*.

You can visit the room where it happened—it is called the Chapel of the Conversion. Except that name is a misnomer. True, Ignatius' conversion began there, but it did not end there. Other Christians may describe their conversion experiences as having occurred at a specific moment. They may even pinpoint the exact date and

time. But Catholics don't generally think about it that way. For most of us conversion is a process, a series of moments, of advance and setback, and the process lasts a lifetime. That was certainly true for Ignatius. He had resolved in his sickbed to serve his earthly king no more, but rather, to follow the King of Kings. So he set out to rival the greatest saints through extreme feats of prayer and fasting—and nearly killed himself in the process. Ignatius was sincere in his desire to become a new man when he left Loyola, but he was still pretty much what he had always been—willful and ego-driven.

It was not until he reached Manresa, a small town on the River Cardoner—where he was so distraught from the lack of progress in his new life that he even contemplated suicide—that he finally gave up his will to a higher power. At the banks of the Cardoner, he told God, in effect: “I give up. I have done all I can. I have tried everything. I'm handing it over to you, to do with it what you will.” And that's the moment things really started to change. In the days that followed, Ignatius' eyes were opened to mystical visions of God and creation that would nourish and inspire him for the rest of his life. At Pamplona, he had refused to surrender and lost the battle. At Manresa, he surrendered at last and won the war.

There is a big lesson in that: We are not in ultimate control of our faith journeys, any more than we control our ultimate destinies. It's true that we have to put in the time and effort—God can do little for us if we are unwilling to cooperate. But Christianity is not a self-help group; it's a God-help group. As long as Ignatius continued to act out of his grandiosity—out of the

belief that he was the origin and destination of everything—then it didn't matter which king he served. Yet when he finally began to act out of gratitude—out of the acknowledgement that God is the origin and destination of everything—then all things became possible. Indeed, things came to be that Ignatius could never have imagined—like a worldwide company of men and their lay colleagues laboring today to advance the kingdom of God on nearly every continent and in every conceivable kind of good work, including the many schools mentioned in this issue.

“Put to death, then, the parts of you that are earthly,” St. Paul told the Colossians. “Stop lying to one another, since you have taken off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed, for knowledge, in the image of its creator.” Ignatius surely loved those words and would have seen his own experience in them, just as surely he would have seen his younger self in the words “vanity of vanities, all is vanity.”

To all that he might have added this admonition, a lesson forged in the crucible of his lifelong conversion: Stop lying to yourself too. The One who is the way and the life is also the truth. And the truth will set you free.

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Matt Malone, S.J.  
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**“Refugee Trauma  
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Karin Vélez, associate professor of History at Macalester College and author of the award-winning *Miraculous Flying House of Loreto: Spreading Catholicism in the Early Modern World* (Princeton, 2018), will deliver the CRGC's inaugural annual lecture. Vélez will speak on the history of devotion to the Holy House of Loreto, the Virgin Mary's house flown from Nazareth to Italy in the 1290s, illuminating the ways in which the actual lived experience of refugees fleeing war zones was central to the history of the Loreto devotion and crucial to its global diffusion through the eighteenth century. As refugee crises continue to shake the world in 2022, the case study of Loreto's miraculous flying house—overlaid with so many contrasting interpretations—offers one impressive example of how surviving disaster might be cumulatively processed across groups, cultures, and generations.



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Pope Francis at the Ermineskin Cree Nation Cemetery at Maskwacis, Alberta, on July 25. The pope issued a historic apology for the Catholic Church's cooperation with Canada's Indigenous residential school system.

Cover image: America's crest with the motto "pursuing the truth in love"



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# GRADUATE THEOLOGY PROGRAMS AT SAINT LOUIS UNIVERSITY

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Interested applicants are invited to contact the program directors (Elizabeth Block: PhD Programs; Rubén Rosario Rodríguez, MARE/MTS Programs) to schedule a one-on-one virtual meeting.

## Will Pope Francis' synod change the church?

Bishop Robert W. McElroy of San Diego asked in the July/August issue of *America* whether synodality could “become a deeper element of Catholic life in the United States?” “Synodality is a process of conversion that requires nurturing and constancy,” wrote Bishop McElroy, who is to become a cardinal during a consistory in Rome on Aug. 27. “By adopting such a pathway, we will sustain the synodal impulse in our nation so that the fruits of the universal synod will enrich and build upon an already growing reality of synodal life.” The piece elicited many and varied responses from our readers. Here are some, edited for length and clarity.

I especially appreciated Bishop McElroy's point about “humanizing truth.” Speaking as a queer Catholic, when I engage with other Catholics on L.G.B.T.Q. issues, the primary experience is one of dehumanization. I frequently see myself and people like me referred to in Catholic (and some mainstream) media as if we are just some sort of ideological issue rather than actual human beings. Often in these conversations, our experiences are discarded in favor of doctrine and theory. My hope and prayer for participants in the synod is that they are able to think about the church's doctrine not just in terms of its theological underpinnings, but also in terms of its impact on actual people.

**Nick Rizzuti**

Synodality requires good shepherds who promote the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, developed from 2,000 years of tradition. The German Synodal Way is on a pathway to schism because it is being led by bishops, priests and laity who have openly defied and denied the 2,000 years of dogmatic theology. We ought to recognize and distinguish between the human failings of the institutional leaders and the figures within it and the divinely protected aspects of the church—as revealed through Scripture and tradition.

**Casey Patrick Augustine**

In the Archdiocese of Seattle, from what I have seen and heard, nothing all that outrageous has happened during the synod. Yes, people are concerned about the church coverup of sex crimes. Yes, some think women should be ordained. But for the most part, Catholics, at least here in western Washington, seem to be pretty much “mainstream” Catholics. They express concerns for the future of the church in part because of the impact of Covid on Mass attendance. They are concerned about having enough money to keep a parish open. But overall, they have faith in God and believe we will all survive this and for the better.

What confounds me are the dioceses that are not endorsing or encouraging the synodal listening sessions. What do they fear? Every time something momentous happened in

the Gospels, it seems like an angel was there to proclaim, “Do not be afraid.” Some of the prelates in this country need to take heed.

**Stephen Healy**

The reality is that the clergy are filtering and choking the synod process. Status quo. Power is a hard drug to kick.

**Rick Landry**

An invigorating and authentic vision; but in terms of implementation, it all depends on the diocese that you are in.

**Michael Marchal**

An in-depth presentation of the ideals of the synod's intent. As stated simply by a prior person, it depends upon the bishop and each parish in a diocese. How many participated? What was sought and by whom and from whom? How on earth were the non-present contacted to learn why they have given up or never encouraged to begin with? While those involved spent long hours dedicated to the request, it depended upon the local bishop's directive from the start.

**Carl Kemmerer**

Bishop McElroy helpfully emphasizes the importance of continuing this synodal engagement over the long term. Sticking with this discernment long enough so that it becomes a regular part of living the Gospel through distributed participation in decision making is and will remain a continuing challenge.

**The Christoffersons**

Thank you for answering the call. Thank you for this article. It gives me hope even though I am too well aware of the depth of the spiritual battle we are embroiled in. I compare it to the church being tempted by the devil to choose between the mind and heart of Jesus and those of John Wayne.

**Christine Gall**



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## Catholic Education on the Margins

In 1808, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton and her religious sisters established a Catholic school for girls in Baltimore. St. Katharine Drexel established mission schools in the South and West to serve African Americans and Native Americans. In the late 19th century, St. Frances Xavier Cabrini established Catholic schools in Chicago to serve the Italian immigrant community.

These and countless other examples demonstrate a simple truth: A Catholic school that serves only the rich is not a Catholic school at all. From the very beginning of Catholic education in the United States, schools have served immigrants and the marginalized communities—Catholic or not. That mission is part of the very identity of a Catholic school.

The recent expansion of Arizona's school voucher program will make it easier for Catholic schools there to fulfill their mission. In July, Gov. Doug Ducey, a graduate of St. John's Jesuit High School in Toledo, Ohio, signed the expansion of the Empowerment Scholarship Account program into law. Starting in September, all Arizona students will be eligible for vouchers—approximately \$6,500 each for students in grades 1 to 12 and \$4,000 for kindergarten students.

Arizona will become the 17th state, along with the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, to have a voucher program. Earlier this year, the Supreme Court ruled that Maine could not exclude religious schools from a tuition assistance program for private schools. In 2020, the court issued a similar ruling in Montana. "A state need not subsidize private education," Chief Justice John G. Roberts wrote for the majority. "But once a state decides to do so, it cannot disqualify some private schools solely be-

cause they are religious."

The expanded voucher program will make it possible for more low- and middle-income families to send their children to private school. The day before the expansion passed the legislature, state lawmakers increased total funding for K-12 education by \$1 billion to serve Arizona's 1.1 million students, a step some saw as appeasing legislators unsure of the program.

Ironically, the Grand Canyon State is one of 37 that still have so-called Blaine amendments, which prevent private schools from receiving public funds, and which **America's** editors have opposed throughout our history. In the late 19th century and early 20th century, following the failure of Republican congressman James Blaine to pass a U.S. constitutional amendment to prevent public funds from going to private schools, states passed amendments of their own to do so.

The Blaine amendments were part of the nativist movement, which led to mob violence against Catholics and the destruction of Catholic property. Blaine amendments still exist, and they are anti-Catholic, as the Supreme Court majority correctly recognized in 2000 and 2020. They should be repealed. They point to the perduring xenophobia and the prevailing myth that pits Catholic and public education against each other in a fight for tax dollars. This is a false dichotomy. State governments can adequately fund both private and public schools.

We must also move past the tired arguments that vouchers for private schools violate the establishment clause of the First Amendment. States with school voucher programs are not endorsing any religion, but instead

choose to support them because they recognize how private schools complement the work of public education.

Both private and public schools work toward the common good of American society. Cristo Rey and Nativity Schools are shining examples of what Catholic education can do for lower-income students, even when no public funding for tuition is available. These Catholic schools open their doors at the intersection of the church and the world.

"In an age awash in information, often transmitted without wisdom or critical sense, the task of forming present and future generations of Catholic teachers and students remains as important as ever," Pope Francis observed earlier this year. "Catholic education is also evangelization: bearing witness to the joy of the Gospel and its power to renew our communities and provide hope and strength in facing wisely the challenges of the present time."

It should come as no surprise that Pope Francis speaks so highly of Catholic schools, as they are primary promoters of a culture of encounter. Catholic schools emphasize serving others and recognizing the human dignity of all. Many of them have service-hour requirements for older students and facilitate class projects to help people in need. Additionally, around 20 percent of students in Catholic schools across the nation are not Catholic.

Georgetown's Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate listed the quality of religious education, academic instruction, discipline and "community" among parents' primary motivations for choosing Catholic education. Catholic high schools have a track record of higher graduation rates than public schools, and Catho-

lic students tend to perform well in college.

Still, despite these benefits, Catholic school enrollment has been steadily declining since 1960, the year it peaked at 5.2 million. While dioceses in the western United States continue to build new schools, according to the National Catholic Education Association, Catholic school enrollment nationwide in 2022 hovered under 1.7 million. This total represented an increase of 3.8 percent over the prior school year, the first increase in two decades, but it remains to be seen whether this was a pandemic-related blip or the beginning of a turnaround.

Our hope is that Catholic education, which has proven time and again that it can form lifelong contributors to American society, is becoming a viable choice for more families. To meet this moment, Catholic schools must renew their commitment to serving immigrant and marginalized communities. In addition to advocating for well-funded public schools, Catholic school communities must reach out and support low-income families who may not otherwise consider a private education to be within reach. Such efforts must include financial support to address prohibitive tuition. The culture of encounter already present in our schools must spread throughout our parish families.

Some policy makers may see a private education as a signifier of upper class society. But the religious liberty Catholic schools so desperately seek is, in fact, the freedom to serve those who would otherwise be unable to afford private school tuition. Through state initiatives like Arizona's new school program, more parents can have a real choice about where to send their children each new morning. Other states would do well to follow that lead.

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## After Dobbs, the U.S. bishops should repudiate anti-abortion extremists

My parents, though they were serious Catholics, never raised me to be an advisor to bishops. Nor, in my weirdest childhood fantasies about excruciating forms of martyrdom that might qualify me for heavenly glory, did I ever think about advising bishops. Nonetheless, here I go.

In May, I warned in *Commonweal* magazine that unless the U.S. bishops were prepared to greet the anticipated Supreme Court decision overturning the constitutional right to abortion with a full-throated call for the protection of vulnerable women and families, the church's voice would be "swallowed up by the harshest and most partisan reactions on either side of the debate."

By and large, the bishops responded as I hoped. "It is a time for healing wounds and repairing social divisions," the U.S.C.C.B. declared in its official statement following the Dobbs decision, "and for coming together to build a society and economy that supports marriages and families, and where every woman has the support and resources she needs to bring her child into this world in love."

Many bishops around the country echoed these sentiments, but they did not get the attention they deserved, likely because they did not fit the major media's script of outrage and confrontation.

But now we are in phase two: the backlash. Every potential dire consequence of Dobbs is being spotlighted, and understandably so. Will women seeking abortions, including victims of rape or incest, be thrown in jail? Will women crossing state lines to obtain abortions be arrested? Will medications inducing abortions be barred from the mail, and phone data used to identify potential abortion seekers?

There are anti-abortion crusaders calling for these measures, and militant abortion rights advocates poised to publicize them.

Anyone doubting that fears of such measures can mobilize voters and money need only look at the Aug. 2 referendum in Kansas. Voters in this conservative state turned out in surprising numbers to soundly defeat a church-backed change to the state constitution that would have allowed the legislature to ban or greatly restrict abortion.

If the bishops want their pastoral approach to remain the face of the pro-life cause, they must explicitly separate themselves and the church from the most extreme voices and initiatives. Unambiguous statements from a few leading prelates will suffice.

I foresee objections to this proposal. Haven't these militant abortion opponents been allies in a long struggle against the cultural current? Don't these activists share the Catholic teaching that human life begins at conception? Can they be criticized for hewing to a deductive logic about "homicide" and the "murder of children" if that logic has also been a staple of Catholic anti-abortion argument?

And wouldn't it be better for the bishops to follow their own pastoral approach and refrain from criticizing others? Won't the abortion rights-friendly media greet any episcopal reproof of extremism in the pro-life movement as a victory, a split in pro-life ranks? To that last question, the answer can only be yes. And a good thing, too. There *is* a division in pro-life ranks, and if the media is eager to note it, so much the better.

There are ways the bishops can say what needs to be said. They can acknowledge common ground with

these righteous warriors while being unambiguous about their differences. They can advocate for legal protection for the unborn while recognizing that criminalization can only go so far toward eliminating abortion. They can acknowledge the Americans who are repelled by anything resembling punitive cruelty toward women confronting crisis pregnancies.

I am uncomfortable writing this. For one thing, I do not agree with the bishops' public teaching on abortion in all respects. I consider the concept of "moment of conception" biologically and morally inadequate, and I believe the bishops overstate what can reasonably be done in a pluralistic society to prohibit abortion in early stages of pregnancy. On the other hand, I applaud the church's persistent defense of unborn human lives. I do not want that defense to be discredited by attitudes contrary to Christian mercy and forgiveness.

There has long been a phalanx of Catholic laypeople and clergy speaking out for a practical and charitable mobilization of resources to reduce the frequency of abortions—and to make it a last resort in dire circumstances rather than a common feature of our culture's view of sexuality and childbirth. But such rank-and-file Catholics cannot speak for the church in a way bishops can. At this moment, making clear not only what the church stands for but what it does not stand for might be the most pro-life thing the bishops can do.

---

*Peter Steinfels is a former editor of Commonweal magazine and religion reporter and columnist for The New York Times. In 2004 he co-founded the Center for Religion and Culture at Fordham University.*



## HELP THE TRANSFORMATION CONTINUE

Father Maloney has announced that he will step down as president and editor in chief this December. In recognition of his accomplishments over the past decade, the Board of Directors created the Jesuit Legacy Fund, to honor his leadership and the transformation of America Media.

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## A 'reckless rush' of executions is scheduled in Oklahoma

By Kevin Clarke

In Oklahoma, 25 death row inmates have been placed in an execution queue that extends through Christmas 2024. If the plan survives court challenges and public resistance, 58 percent of the people on Oklahoma's death row, "including multiple prisoners with severe mental illness, brain damage, and claims of innocence," will be put to death, according to the Death Penalty Information Center.

"This rush to execute would be reckless in any state, but Oklahoma in particular has a horrendous track record for problematic executions," said Krisanne Vaillancourt Murphy, the executive director of Catholic Mobilizing Network, an anti-death-penalty advocacy group affiliated with the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Ms. Vaillancourt Murphy noted recent examples: the lethal injection of John Grant in 2021, "who convulsed and vomited repeatedly before dying"; the execution of Clayton Lockett in 2014, "who took more than 40 minutes to die"; and the execution of Charles Warner in 2015, "in which the wrong drug was used."

The state's poor handling of executions led to a court challenge from 28 death row prisoners that was turned back by a federal judge on June 6. Four days later Attorney

General John O'Connor of Oklahoma filed an application for rescheduling the executions for all inmates who had exhausted their appeals.

Explaining the unprecedented pace he proposed to the court, he wrote, "For the sake of the victims' families—many of whom have waited for decades—as many executions as possible are set four weeks apart."

Archbishop Paul S. Coakley of Oklahoma City was among local religious leaders who condemned the attorney general's request. "Killing 25 human beings as punishment for killing—even if guilty—only perpetuates the cycle of violence and offers none of the mercy and opportunity for redemption Jesus asks of us," he said. "We also can't undo it if we're wrong."

Brett Farley, the executive director of the Catholic Conference of Oklahoma, wonders how the state can proceed as if the "cruel and unusual" challenges to its execution cocktail have been resolved. He is confident more court challenges are forthcoming.

What he calls "the principal question in the matter" also remains to be heard out: "Are we really a state and a culture that values life?"



“If we are,” Mr. Farley said, “then we need to question whether we’re going to be moving forward with this death penalty policy, especially in light of the fact that so many of these death sentences have been called into question.”

Helen Prejean, C.S.J., said the proposed rush of executions in Oklahoma was an unpleasant reminder of the final days of the Trump administration, when Attorney General William P. Barr pushed through 13 executions in just six months—the first federally mandated executions in 17 years. Sister Helen is a longtime campaigner against the death penalty and the author of *Dead Man Walking*, *The Death of Innocents* and *River of Fire*.

The two execution sprees, Sister Helen said, demonstrate the capriciousness of the capital punishment regime in the United States. It was that arbitrariness that was the rationale for the Supreme Court’s decision to suspend the death penalty in *Furman v. Georgia* in 1972.

More evidence of contemporary inconsistency can be found in both the number and location of recent executions and death row sentences. A federal moratorium on executions has been restored by the Biden administration, and according to D.P.I.C., executions and new capital sentences around the country have diminished to a trickle.

Just 11 people were executed in 2021. “More than two-thirds of U.S. states—36 out of 50—have either abolished the death penalty or have not carried out an execution in at least 10 years,” D.P.I.C. reports. Executions in the United States are increasingly conducted in just a handful of states—Texas and Oklahoma among them.

To Sister Helen, that suggests a status quo on capital punishment that has reverted to the arbitrariness to which the Supreme Court objected. Guidelines established by the court in *Gregg v. Georgia* provided a rationale to restore the death penalty just four years after *Furman*, but they included broad discretionary powers to prosecutors to seek death or not.

That individual oversight “assures that it’s always going to be capricious,” Sister Helen said. “It’s in the hands of faulty, ignorant, politically driven individuals called D.A.s or prosecutors who make decisions to seek death.”

A growing awareness of the flaws and misconduct in death penalty prosecutions is provoking criticism of capital punishment from all sides of the political spectrum in Oklahoma, according to Mr. Farley. “Some elected Republicans are publicly questioning the death penalty in ways that we never would have imagined even five years ago,” he said. “We’re really coming to the precipice of publicly ques-

tioning whether we ought to be moving forward with this policy at all.”

Sister Helen has been especially involved with the effort to review the trial and sentencing of Richard Glossip, currently scheduled to be executed on Sept. 22 despite a widespread uproar over the circumstances of his conviction.

Mr. Glossip maintains his innocence in the 1997 murder-for-hire of Barry Van Treese. Justin Sneed, the man who killed Van Treese, received a plea deal in exchange for testimony that Mr. Glossip had paid him to commit the murder, but an independent investigation found that police manipulated that testimony. The inquiry also reported that a box of possibly exculpatory evidence was destroyed at the order of Oklahoma County prosecutors before Mr. Glossip’s second trial.

Reaching out to Oklahoma Catholics, the state conference will “call attention to the problems that we’ve had historically in Oklahoma with the execution protocol,” Mr. Farley said. “But we’re using this also as a teaching opportunity to explain the Catholic position on the death penalty, which has been consistent over time, and that is one of mercy.

“If we believe that human life has inherent sanctity and value, then it’s either true or it’s not,” he said, not offered to some but denied to others. “We can’t compartmentalize our position on the sanctity of life.”

After recent revisions to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* urged by Pope Francis, which describe the use of capital punishment as “inadmissible,” Sister Helen said the teaching of the church on the death penalty is in “clear alignment with the Gospel and also in alignment with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,” protecting “the inalienable right to life of every human being and the inviolable dignity of the human person made in the image of God, who can never under any circumstances, be rendered completely senseless and deliberately killed.”

She objects especially to anyone who attempts to justify the death penalty on biblical grounds. “The Gospel of Jesus is just the opposite of it,” she said. “The nonviolent Gospel of Jesus is all about making peace, having to deal with forgiveness and reconciliation with justice.”

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Kevin Clarke, *chief correspondent*. Twitter: @ClarkeAtAmerica.  
With reporting from Patrick Cullinan, *summer intern*. Twitter: @PatricktheLess.

## A major shift on abortion among Latino Catholics?

A new survey from the Public Religion Research Institute hints at what could be a major swing on views about abortion among Latino Catholics. According to P.R.R.I., 75 percent of Hispanic Catholics say abortion should be legal in “most or all cases,” up from 51 percent in a P.R.R.I. poll from 2010. P.R.R.I. conducted the latest survey in June, immediately after the Supreme Court announced its reversal of *Roe v. Wade*. The pollster also reported a major swing in support for abortion among Black Protestants: 75 percent supported abortion in most or all cases, up from 56 percent in 2010.

The P.R.R.I. survey is one snapshot that may not be duplicated by other pollsters, but its 24-point shift raises the question: Are views on abortion changing in the Latino community?

Ken Johnson-Mondragón, the director of pastoral engagement for the California Catholic Conference, believes that the frenzy of media coverage following the reversal of *Roe* likely boosted pro-choice numbers, at least for now. That presumed shift in attitudes has not been steady. In 2019, P.R.R.I. reported that 52 percent of Hispanic Catholics said abortion should be illegal in “most or all cases.”

P.R.R.I. also reported that only 16 percent of respondents said they looked to religious leaders for guidance on abortion. Noting the church’s waning influence, how should Catholic Latinos engage in the conversation about abortion?

Latino and pro-life leaders suggest finding issues pro-life and abortion rights supporters can agree on and pushing for legislative solutions that address problems like poverty, the high cost of child care and employer policies that make it harder for working women to have children.

“It’s contrary to human dignity for a woman to have to choose between an education and the life of her child,” said Julie Fritsch Dumalet, the director of the pro-life office for the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston. “It’s also contrary to human dignity that a woman would lose her job because she became pregnant.

“We don’t want children to grow up in poverty with parents that didn’t want to raise them and who have no other options,” she said. “We can come to a meeting of the minds with these concerns. So let’s work toward other solutions.”

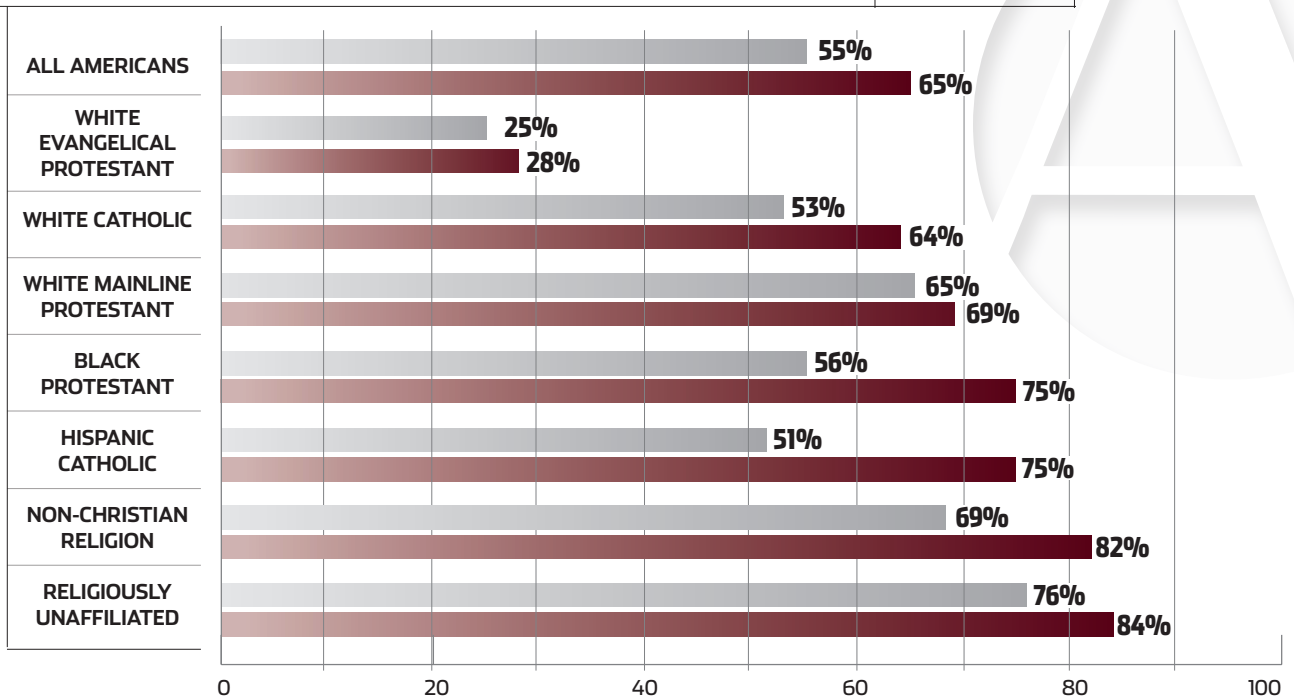
J.D. Long-García, senior editor. Twitter: @jdlongarcia.

### VEIWS ON ABORTION LEGALITY, 2010-2022, BY RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION

Percent who say abortion should be legal in most cases:

OCTOBER 2010

JUNE 2022



Source: PRRI 2010 and 2022 surveys

“  
*May we never yield to the temptation to disregard others, especially those in greatest need, and to look the other way; instead, may we strive daily, in concrete and practical ways, to form a community composed of brothers and sisters who accept and care for one another.*  
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# The cost of justice

## Newfoundland churches sold to compensate Mount Cashel survivors

In Newfoundland, Canada, a group of elderly survivors of abuse at the infamous Mount Cashel Orphanage are finally receiving compensation ordered by a landmark ruling in 2020 that went against the Archdiocese of St. John's. But to finance the settlement, the archdiocese has had to sell scores of church properties, including some churches whose histories trace back generations.

"I grew up in Catholic schools, and we were taught the Holy Trinity with the shamrock: home, school and church," said Patricia Walsh-Warren, a lifetime member of St. Patrick's Church and a regional organizer for Development and Peace (Caritas Canada). St. Patrick's "was our church. Home was home, and school was school. And that was it. Those were the three main components of growing up in St. John's."

Now the church has been sold to a real estate group whose intentions for the property are unknown. The sales of 42 other diocesan properties—including a dozen other churches—have so far been approved by the courts.

The sales follow a final appeal to the provincial Supreme Court, which found that the archdiocese was "vicariously liable" for sexual abuse perpetrated by members of the Irish Christian Brothers decades ago at Mount Cashel Orphanage.

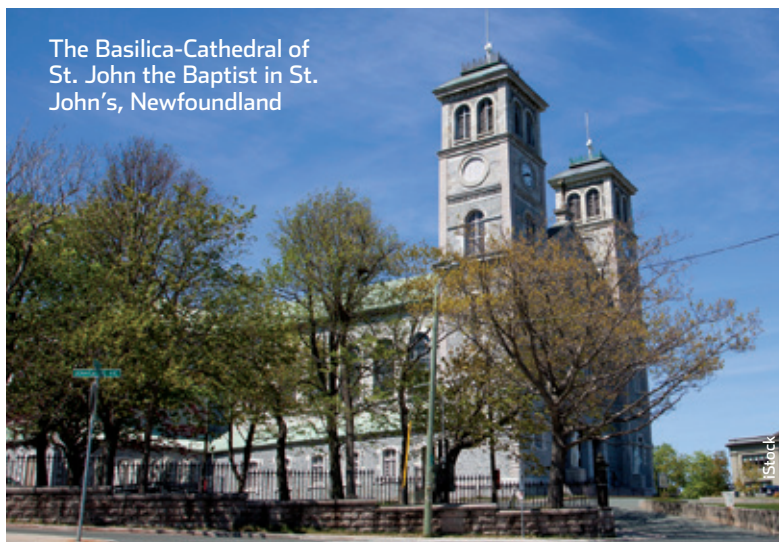
Growing up at Mount Cashel, "all the time, there was fear," John Doe No. 26 told CBC News. "My memory of that will never go away."

Survivor No. 26 described the brutality he experienced as "like something you'd see in a concentration camp." Brothers would force the boys to whip each other in front of their classmates, he said. They would compete to see who could hit the children the hardest. They would fondle, kiss and violate the children entrusted to their care.

"I don't like hurting people.... But the church is responsible for this, so the church has to pay," he said. "It's necessary for me. I think it's necessary for the other boys."

Each of the four plaintiffs in that decision—including John Doe No. 26—were awarded \$1.9 million in damages. Now four other law firms, collectively representing more than 100 other survivors, are expected to file more claims. The archdiocese anticipates the settlement costs will eventually exceed \$39 million.

To raise money for the settlements, the archdiocese is liquidating hundreds of properties from 34 parishes. Many



The Basilica-Cathedral of St. John the Baptist in St. John's, Newfoundland

parishioners quickly mobilized to save the churches where they had worshiped for generations.

"The community feels relieved," said Rob Blackie, a spokesperson for a coalition that managed to place the winning bid of just over \$2.3 million for the Basilica-Cathedral of St. John the Baptist, the Jesuit-run St. Bonaventure's College and the nearby community center, St. Bon's Forum.

The new owners intend that St. John's Basilica will continue as a place of worship. The college and the forum will also continue to serve the community.

Representatives from some of the purchased parishes are working out arrangements with new owners that could allow parish properties to continue to operate as churches. But other parish properties have been purchased by developers who plan to use the land for other purposes.

Ms. Walsh-Warren and the other members of St. Patrick's no longer face the question whether they will have to leave their parish, but instead when. The heartbreaking process of saying goodbye to a home they have known for generations has already begun.

"St. Patrick's is one of—if not the only—church that remains open in the city daily for people to just go in for quiet prayer. So that's a huge loss to the whole city itself," Ms. Walsh-Warren said. "I don't think the reality will actually fully set in until we have that final Mass in September."

The knowledge that the funds from the church sales will be going to the survivors provides some measure of comfort to congregations in St. John's Archdiocese.

"Many, many of the victims have passed away without seeing closure to this," Ms. Walsh-Warren said. "So yes, that is definitely a light at the end of the tunnel, that we're finally dealing with something that needed to be dealt with."

*Aloysius Wong contributes from Toronto, Canada. Twitter: @Alowishoes.*

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*These grants are made possible through the generous support of Lilly Endowment Inc.*





# Liberation lost in South Africa?

## Corruption and incompetence plague African National Congress

It was hailed as a liberation movement under the revered South African president and global political icon Nelson Mandela. Now, as the party leading an increasingly dysfunctional and corrupt government, the African National Congress seems doomed to follow the ruinous path of other liberation movements in Africa.

The country's current president, Cyril Ramaphosa, is suspected of corruption after it was revealed that millions of dollars in U.S. currency had been stolen from his private game farm. Instead of calling police to report the crime, Mr. Ramaphosa attempted to keep the robbery from the South African public, raising questions about possible tax evasion and money laundering. The scandal, dubbed Farmgate, now threatens his political survival.

But that burgeoning scandal is only the latest example of dysfunction within the A.N.C. Critics warn that corruption and incompetence have become endemic in the governing party, contributing to a massive breakdown in basic services.

Serious allegations of corruption had been swirling around former President Jacob Zuma for years before other A.N.C. leaders pressed him to resign in 2018. Now multiple charges of criminal activity have been brought against him. The former president has spent the last four years defying the criminal court system, maintaining an ongoing political and legal battle to evade accountability.

When he took over from Mr. Zuma, Mr. Ramaphosa promised a "new dawn"—that he would be tough on cor-

ruption. Instead, he retained many of Mr. Zuma's former cabinet ministers. Many of those ministers likewise face allegations of corruption.

One outcome of South Africa's deepening political crisis has been the breakdown of much of the country's infrastructure. Regular disruptions of power and the water supply and the nation's crumbling infrastructure are signs of South Africa's decay. The transport, education, police and health care services have reached breaking points.

The country's extensive rail system has been thoroughly vandalized and its resources looted. Some analysts say privatization may be the only way the network can be restored, but that could mean that many poor people will not be able to afford the service.

Many of the country's rural schools are also not fit for their purpose. A number of children have died after falling into pit latrines in recent years, and over 3,000 schools in some of the country's most impoverished areas still do not have proper sanitation. The A.N.C.-led government has failed to deliver on the promises it made to ensure that this basic and fundamental right of all children to an education is upheld.

In mid-June 2022 the national auditor-general's office announced that only 41 of South Africa's 230 municipalities had received satisfactory audits. The office said that the fiscal condition of 28 percent of these local governments was so deficient that there was "significant doubt" they could continue operating.



Embattled President Cyril Ramaphosa of South Africa addresses Parliament in Cape Town on June 9.

AP Photo/Nardus Engelbrecht



Pope Francis greets Sister Raffaella Petrini at the Vatican in December 2015.

## GOODNEWS: Three women are historic appointments in Rome

Continuing to open up new positions of responsibility for women in the Roman Curia, Pope Francis appointed three women as members of the Dicastery for Bishops in July. It is the first time ever that women have been given this role.

Raffaella Petrini, F.S.E., has been the highest-ranking woman in the Vatican since Francis appointed her as secretary general of the Governorate of the Vatican City State in 2021. Sister Petrini, of the Franciscan Sisters of the Eucharist, is a former university professor and official at the Dicastery for the Evangelization of Peoples.

Yvonne Reungoat, F.M.A., holds degrees in history and geography and in 2008 was elected as the first non-Italian superior general of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, the women's branch of the Salesians. In 2019, Pope Francis appointed her as one of the first seven women members of the Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life.

María Lía Zervino is the president of the World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations and a member of the Association of Consecrated Virgins "Servidoras," which was founded in Buenos Aires. Francis has known her since he was archbishop of Buenos Aires. Last year, she wrote an open letter to him to thank him for all he has done for the church since becoming pope, but also appealing to him to give more space and a greater role to women in the church.

These three dynamic women will join some 30 cardinals and bishops for regular meetings at the Vatican to select, vote upon and present to the pope the names of the persons they consider as the most suitable candidates to be bishops in Europe, North and South America, Oceania and several countries in Asia.

Gerard O'Connell, Vatican correspondent. Twitter: @gerryorome.

South Africa was a beacon of hope to the world in 1994, when apartheid was defeated and a democratic era was ushered in. It is difficult to find much to be hopeful about now.

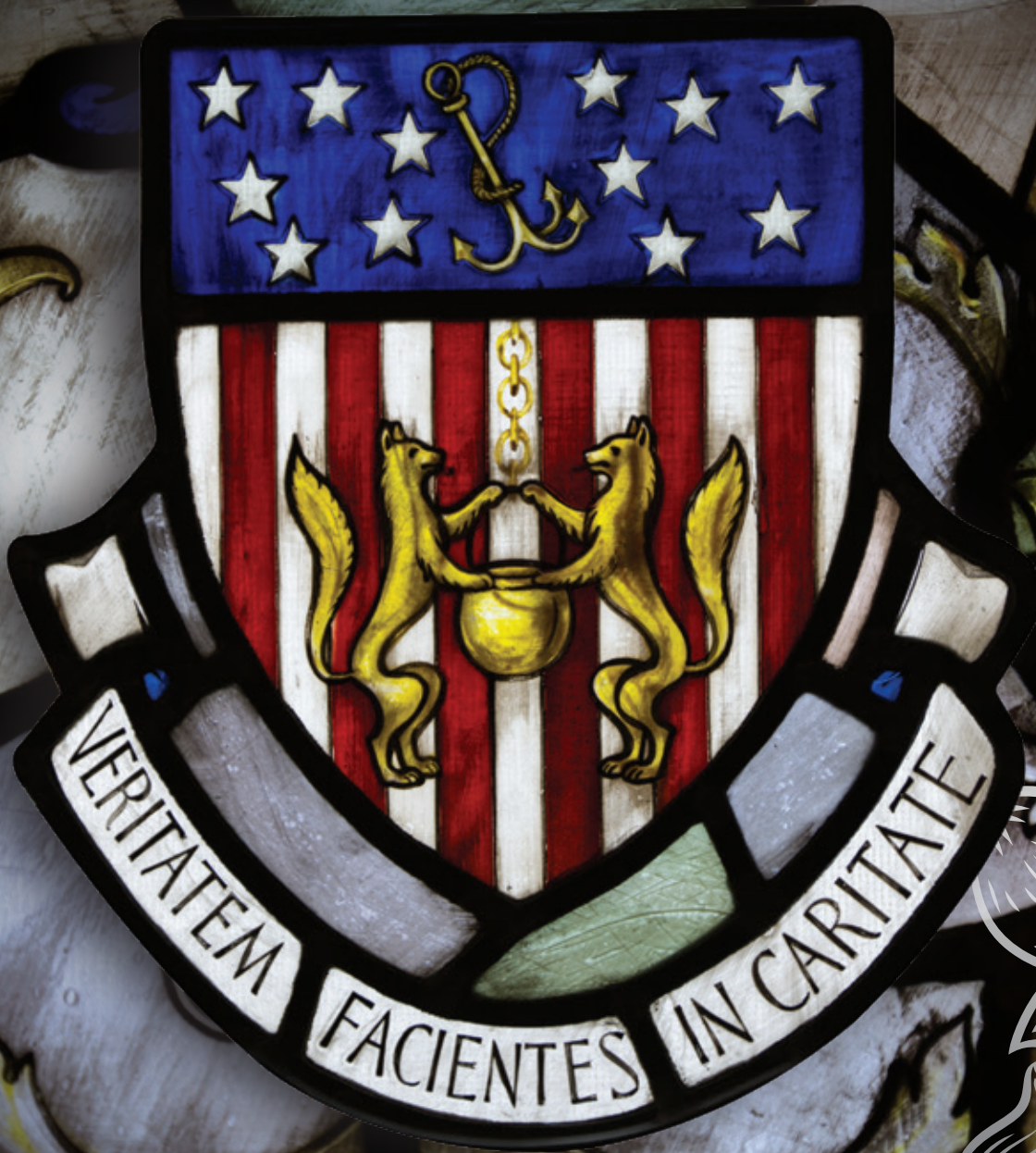
Despite numerous promises from the party's leadership, the A.N.C appears unable to reform itself. At the same time there appears to be no viable political alternative to the discredited party.

Many South Africans say that their social conscience was formed and energized by the church's participation in the struggle against apartheid. Since 1994, however, the church has also retreated, and today it remains silent in the face of endemic political corruption and decay. It is as if the church, too, is not sure what to do to respond to South Africa's many crises.

South Africa needs to re-imagine itself, Sizwe Mpofu-Walsh, a prominent political analyst, says. He warns that the government's many failures "now verge on a humanitarian disaster, so deep are the devastations and depredations on which they rest."

The democratic liberation in South Africa is under threat today by the very party that achieved that hard-fought victory.

Russell Pollitt, S.J., *Johannesburg correspondent*. Twitter: @rpollittsj.





# AN OPEN MIND AND AN OPEN HEART

*Reflections on a decade of pursuing the truth*

By Matt Malone

A little after 9 a.m. on Oct. 1, 2012, my first day as editor in chief of **America**, I entered my new office at our old headquarters on 56th Street in Manhattan. I was greeted by a display of 13 photographs of my predecessors—“a rogues gallery” as Father Joe O’Hare, whose face is among the group, once called it. These were the men who, with varying degrees of skill and success, had shepherded this review through its first century. I felt then, as I do now, the grace and the burden of that legacy. More the grace, I suppose, especially now, as I prepare to lay down the burden. My photograph will join the others before the year is over, and I will become a part of **America**’s history. That deadline has me taking stock of the last decade I have spent working alongside my colleagues, and the history we have made together.

The task before us on that first day was simple to conceive and difficult to execute: to ready **America** for a new century of work. Our goal was to transform the organization into a multiplatform media ministry, one that would produce content in addition to our flagship print magazine, including on the web, on social media, and through audio, video and live events. A decade later, the fruits of our labors are apparent. We have redesigned and relaunched **America**’s print and digital editions, launched a video division, started a media fellowship for young professionals, instituted a travel

and pilgrimage program for our readers, rebooted the Catholic Book Club, produced several groundbreaking podcasts, and recruited a worldwide network of correspondents and contributing writers.

In 2012, **America** employed 16 people. Today, we employ 43 women and men, and the vast majority are lay people. Our website has about two million unique visitors a month, more than 10 times what it was in 2012. Even the number of print subscribers is twice what it was that first day. **America** is practically unrecognizable from the magazine I went to work for as a Jesuit novice almost 20 years ago.

I am immensely proud of the team of dedicated professionals who accomplished this transformation. I have often said that the best part of my job is going to work every day with the smartest, hardest-working, most dedicated group of people I know. And I am immeasurably grateful to you—our readers, listeners, viewers, commenters, in short, our community—who have made it all possible. **America** does not exist for its own sake, but in order to serve you. If they were here today, each of the 13 men in that “rogues gallery” would remind me that the relationship between **America** and its readers is a sacred trust. That is why, soon after my first day in 2012, I wrote to you, in the form of an essay in these pages, “Pursuing the Truth in Love,” in which I



# The solution to the problem of ideological warfare cannot be more ideological warfare.

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outlined **America's** editorial direction for a new century of work. As I wrote then, "**America** is not a magazine, though we publish one; nor is **America** a Web site, though we have one of those as well. **America** is a Catholic ministry, and both of those words—Catholic and ministry—are carefully chosen."

What does it mean to be a Catholic media ministry in the contemporary United States? By far the hardest part of our work was answering that question—even more difficult than overcoming the significant operational and commercial challenges we faced. That is because our answer to that critical question sailed our relatively tiny ship directly into the political and ecclesial winds.

## Confronting Polarization

"Every Christian ministry, as a participation in the one ministry of Christ, is a ministry of reconciliation," I wrote in "Pursuing the Truth in Love." If that is so, we reasoned, then the urgent task for our communications ministry would be to bring people together, to put folks in conversation who were not accustomed to talking to each other. We wanted **America** to address directly the ideological partisanship and polarization that undermines American democracy and enfeebles the church's witness.

It was a tall order, even then.

You may recall that I announced in that same issue in 2013 that **America** would stop using the words *liberal*, *conservative* and *moderate* when referring to our fellow

Catholics in an ecclesial context. Those words are useful in secular politics, but not necessarily in the church, which is an altogether different reality—political, for sure, like all things human—but also radically apart, for our unity as a church resides not in some shared political credo but in the body of the risen Lord.

Many people told us that avoiding those political terms would prove difficult, but that seemed to say more about the depth of their attachment to construing the church in factional terms than to the actual challenge at hand. It was relatively easy to adopt the style rule; we are writers—we simply used different words. The hard part was convincing people why the change was necessary, why the ideological partisanship embedded in the ecclesial use of such terms was and remains so dangerous.

"An ideology," wrote the political theorist Kenneth Minogue, "is a set of ideas whose primary coherence results not from their truth and consistency, as in science and philosophy, but from some external cause; most immediately, this external cause will be some mood, vision, or emotion. The intellectual mark of ideology is the presence of dogma, beliefs which have been dug deep into the ground and are surrounded by semantic barbed wire." Whether they originate with the political left or right, or are draped in secular or religious sentiment, ideologies are a form of circular reasoning, which shut down the conversation among all but their adherents.

I am sure you know exactly what I am talking about, for you see the effects of ideological partisanship every day, on cable news, in the newspaper and on your social media feeds. Indeed, it is everywhere—from the Academy Awards ceremony, to our elementary schools, to our dining rooms. Pope Francis has spoken about it repeatedly: "The concept of popular and national unity influenced by various ideologies is creating new forms of selfishness under the guise of defending national identity," he has said.

Ideologies are particularly dangerous for Christians, for they turn the church in on itself. The pope has warned us of how "the faith passes, so to speak, through a distiller and becomes ideology. And ideology does not beckon [people]. In ideologies there is not Jesus: in his tenderness, his love, his meekness. And ideologies are rigid, always. And when a Christian becomes a disciple of an ideology, he has lost the faith: he is no longer a disciple of Jesus, he is a disciple of this attitude of thought."

And so for the last decade we have tried to help counter the effects of ideological partisanship by breaking down the echo chambers it relies on; to host a different kind of

discourse, a forum for a diversity of viewpoints. What have we learned? Quite a lot. And some of those lessons are worth recalling, because, for starters, **America** is going to continue this approach. And one of the biggest lessons is that this approach is worth continuing.

My successor will surely bring change and innovation—all 14 of his predecessors have done that—but I also know that the entire organization, from the board of directors on down, remains committed to leading a conversation among diverse voices. We need this witness now more than ever, for its own merits, certainly, but also because we need to show that a media group can take such an approach and can also be commercially successful.

### **The Church and the World**

My successor, of course, will face some vigorous headwinds of his own, for the problem of ideological partisanship is even worse than it was in 2012—exponentially worse. There are many statistics and scholarly reports that demonstrate this, but there is perhaps no clearer evidence than the attacks on the U.S. Capitol by U.S. citizens on Jan. 6, 2021. It is an event that in 2012 seemed inconceivable. Rarely in the long century since **America** magazine was founded have the norms and institutions that safeguard our national life been under greater strain.

The Catholic Church in the United States mirrors these sharp divisions along partisan lines. A recent Pew Research Center report demonstrated that “Catholic partisans often express opinions that are much more in line with the positions of their political parties than with the teachings of their church.” The Catholic vote, once courted, no longer exists as a uniform bloc—if it ever did. One hardly has to look beyond Twitter to see evidence of this. We have entered an era in which Catholics cannot even agree on the answer to the old rhetorical question: Is the pope Catholic?


Over the last decade I have heard from some people that they think the crises in our democracy and in our church are so menacing that **America** magazine should abandon its commitment to hosting a diversity of voices and should instead take sides in the partisan warfare; that, in 2022, our editorial commitment to balance and diversity of opinion seems quaint if not a little dangerous. But that suggestion stems from the same Manichaeian worldview that actually powers polarization—the conviction, on both sides of the partisan divide, that we are engaged in some unprecedented, apocalyptic struggle between good and evil. Yet that is precisely the kind of “simplistic reductionism” that Pope Francis has warned us against.

In his address to the U.S. Congress in 2015, Pope Francis cautioned against seeing the world only in terms of “good or evil; or, if you will, the righteous and sinners. The contemporary world, with its open wounds which affect so many of our brothers and sisters,” he said, “demands that we confront every form of polarization which would divide it into these two camps. We know that in the attempt to be freed of the enemy without, we can be tempted to feed the enemy within.”

Some will no doubt point out that a lot has changed since the pope said those words in 2015, that **America**’s editorial approach belongs to a classical liberal order that is crumbling around us. I agree that the threat is real, but I fail to see how we can save the liberal order by abandoning it. And saving it is our urgent task, for whether we like it or not, the effective operation of American-style democracy is inseparable from the principles of objectivity, accountability and pluralism that belong to the liberal order. The solution to the problem of ideological warfare cannot be more ideological warfare. Democracy only works in a marketplace of ideas where voters can shop for their choices. “A nation that is afraid to let its people judge truth and falsehood in an open market,” President John F. Kennedy said, “is a nation that is afraid of its people.”

Yet as the author Jonathan Rauch recently noted, the metaphor of the marketplace gets us only so far, because ideas do not talk to each other, people do; and in the contemporary United States “our conversations are mediated through institutions like journals and newspapers and other platforms; and they rely on a dense network of rules, like truthfulness and fact-checking.” Without such conventions, there is only the barroom brawl of social media.

At the same time, **America**’s mediation is not disinterested. We make no claim to complete objectivity, as if we are Dian Fossey observing gorillas in the mist. **America** is a Catholic, Jesuit review, and we believe in balance and diversity, not in spite of our Catholic identity, but because of it. “True to its name and to its character as a Catholic review,” the editors wrote in our first editorial in 1909, “**America** [is] cosmopolitan, not only in contents but also in spirit.” (Read the first editorial in its entirety on Page 30.) Joseph A. O’Hare, S.J., the 10th editor in chief, put it this way: “A Catholic journal of opinion should be reasonably catholic in the opinions it is willing to consider. Which is not to say that *catholic* means indiscriminate. It does mean, however, that we will publish views contrary to our own, as long as we think they deserve the attention of thoughtful Catholics.”



# We speak truth not just to those in power but to those who actually have real power over us.

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We still believe in the indispensable value of competing ideas—besieged though this value is in the academy and elsewhere. An intelligent, contested and charitable public discourse should form the substance of our discernment in both the church and the world. It is ironic that at a time when the value of such diversity is being called more and more into question, we should have a pope who has put it into action in unprecedented ways. Pope Francis obviously believes in God, but he also engages in dialogues with atheists. He believes in a socially conscious approach to economics, but he has met and spoken with capitalists. He has spoken out strongly against what he calls “transgender ideology,” but he knows and has met with transgender people. The pope has demonstrated that engaging with opinions that are different from your own does not require you to abandon your own deeply held beliefs. While there is little that human beings do that surprises me, one thing I will never understand is why we so often feel existentially threatened by people who have different views.

Scott Hahn, the biblical scholar from Franciscan University? A lot of people like his work. Some do not. Kerry Kennedy, the president of R.F.K. Human Rights? A lot of people like her work. Some do not. I doubt that those two Catholics would agree about very much, but they have at least one thing in common: They both appeared in **America** in the last decade because we thought you should hear from them. And we have applied that standard across our platforms. In the realm of economics, for example, we have published capitalists, communitarians, social democrats, libertarians, even a communist. No one who reads **Amer-**

**ica**’s unsigned editorials could mistake most of those opinions for those of our editorial board. But offering you our corporate opinion is but one, relatively small part of what **America** does. Our main task is to host opinions, to expose you to a variety of individuals and groups, all within the broad spectrum of Catholic opinion.

I wrote in 2013, “there is no faithful Catholic voice that is not welcome in the pages of **America**; there is no quarter of the church in which **America** is not at home.” As I have made the case for our approach over the years, I have sometimes been asked something like, “Well, would you publish Hitler?” For the record, no, we would not. I don’t think Herr Hitler qualifies as a faithful Catholic. But the problem is not really the relatively short list of people we would never publish, but the increasingly long list of people whom various ideologues and partisans think we should never publish. Polarization makes us think that subjects are closed when they are not, or shouldn’t be. Applying Catholic teaching in the real world is a difficult calculus, and few of the choices are obvious. What one person thinks is objectively false, someone else thinks is debatable, or we judge at any rate that a sizable part of the Catholic population judges it to be debatable and the authors’ views are worth reading. When you enter the conversation at **America**, you are entering into the middle of it, not the beginning and not the end. That is why it is important to keep reading.

The blacklisting of authors because of their political views or associations, part of the so-called cancel culture, is a direct consequence of polarization and the ideological partisanship that fuels it. It is un-American, but even more, it is un-Christian, for in the Catholic worldview, truth is ultimately a person, Jesus Christ, the way and the truth and the light. Truth, in other words, is someone we encounter, not something we possess. Does it not follow that a Christian faith requires an open mind as well as an open heart?

## Speaking Truth to Power

We have a catchword at **America** that we use internally, a kind of one-word summation of our editorial credo: fearlessness. Leading the conversation is not easy at any time, let alone in a time of intense polarization. The daily slings and arrows on social media take their toll. On those occasions when we have said or done something that proved unpopular, “fearlessness” became the watchword of the day. But courage and fearlessness are sometimes misunderstood, especially in this line of work. Speaking truth to power, for example, is an important thing to do, but it is also a tough thing to do, and it requires a lot of courage.

There are places in the world, in fact, where speaking truth to power can get you killed. Jesus did it and that is exactly what happened.

One of the subtler but still damaging effects of ideological partisanship, however, is that it can blind us to where power actually lies. It is sometimes said, for example, that **America** has to be very careful to avoid offending bishops because, unlike other media outlets, **America** is sponsored by a religious order. According to this view, **America** sometimes does not tell the bishops what they need to hear. But there are several problems with this thinking. First, it's not true—we do offer respectful criticism when we think it is warranted. Second, every publication has things it would not say even if it wanted to. National Catholic Reporter would no more editorialize in favor of the church's ban on female priests than First Things would editorialize in favor of same-sex marriage. Their readers wouldn't tolerate it. You should not assume, moreover, that the editors of **America** all think the same way, or spend their days wishing we could say things that we can't. That has not been my experience, at any rate.

But prescinding from that baseline, the charge that **America** might pull its punches—a critique that usually proceeds from an ideological view about structures and power—misconstrues where the power really lies. For **America** to criticize the bishops would not require much courage. They are (unfairly, I think) the least popular Catholics in the country. On the contrary, it takes some courage to tell Catholics that the bishops might be right about something. It took courage to withdraw our endorsement of the Supreme Court nomination of fellow Catholic Brett Kavanaugh. It takes courage to buck the prevailing liberal ethos on matters of human sexuality or abortion or economics. It took courage to say that Donald Trump was right on the few occasions when he was.

That is the kind of courage you should expect **America** to muster—to say things that might actually cost us. We speak truth not just to those in power but to those who actually have real power over us. I have learned in this decade that the most powerful force in **America**'s corner of the popular discourse is not Donald Trump (who's never heard of us), or the U.S. bishops (who mostly like or tolerate us), but the social media users who police the boundaries of ideological orthodoxy with cynical and ferocious tenacity. They can be found everywhere, in every corner of social media and across the ideological spectrum. We should pay more attention to you and less attention to them.

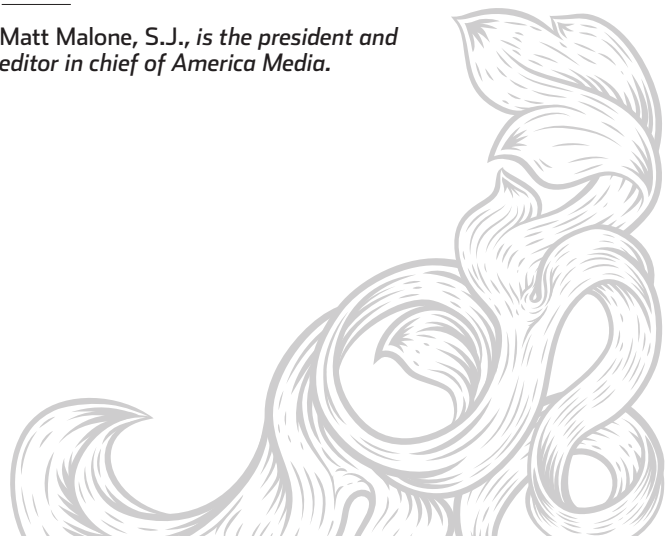
## Hope Ahead

I am proud of what we have done during this decade at **America**. We could have done more—there is always more to do—but I believe we have done our level best to be a part of the solution and not the problem. That the problem of ideological partisanship and polarization has only gotten worse is an unsettling trend, to be sure; but I am not hopeless, and there is a very good reason for that: I have met you. Yes, some people believe that we have just been jousting at windmills for this decade, that our conviction that a better public discourse is possible is nothing more than an idealist's fantasy. But those who think that do not know you as I have come to know you. I have now traveled the length and breadth of this country—you have welcomed me into your parishes and your homes and have shared with me your hopes and fears.

I trust you. I know you do not fear new ideas, that you are not afraid of different viewpoints; that you are suspicious of claims not thought through to their consequences; that you value intelligence and, above all, charity. I know all of that because I know you. You give me hope, not a giddy, cock-eyed optimism, but a simple hope, born of our common faith, the very thing I wrote about in my first-day column in 2012; words we have sought to live by for a decade: “We simply hope that our review—in print and online—will serve as one model of a truly Catholic as well as a truly American public discourse, one marked by faith, hope and charity. In other words, we seek nothing more than to bear public witness to the healer of all our afflictions, the balm in Gilead, the One whose spirit even now lives among us, among the people of these United States.”

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*Matt Malone, S.J., is the president and editor in chief of America Media.*



# EDITORIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

April 17, 1909

*The following editorial announcement was published in America's inaugural issue on April 17, 1909. From the start, the editors were adamant that the goal was not to cover simply church affairs or religious topics: America was to be "cosmopolitan not only in contents but also in spirit," a journal of general interest to all Americans despite its specific Jesuit charism and Catholic foundation. More than a century later, any survey of America's content shows that the original mission remains relevant for our staff and readers alike. Telegraph and cable are no longer used, but neither labor nor expense are spared to "make America worthy of its name."*

The object, scope and character of this review are sufficiently indicated in its name, and they are further exhibited in the contents of this first number.

AMERICA will take the place of the monthly periodical, The Messenger, and continue its mission. It is in reality an adaptation of its precursor to meet the needs of the time. Among these needs are a review and conscientious criticism of the life and literature of the day, a discussion of actual questions and a study of vital problems from the Christian standpoint, a record of religious progress, a defense of sound doctrine, an authoritative statement of the position of the Church in the thought and activity of modern life, a removal of traditional prejudice, a refutation of erroneous news, and a correction of misstatements about beliefs and practices which millions hold dearer than life. These needs, moreover, are too numerous, too frequent and too urgent to be satisfied by a monthly periodical, no matter how vigilant or comprehensive it may be.

The march of events is too rapid, and every week has its paramount interests which are lost or forgotten, unless dealt with as soon as they arise. In the opinion of many, a daily organ would be required to treat these interests adequately. Until such time as a daily may be possible, if really desirable, the weekly review we propose to publish is an imperative need. The newspapers which appear every week under Catholic auspices in the United States, Canada and Mexico do not attempt to chronicle events of secular interest or to discuss questions of the day in the light of Christian principles. They are for the most part diocesan or local journals, many of them excellent in their way, but limited in the range of subjects, and circumscribed in territory.

There are hundreds of these local Catholic weekly news-

papers, but not one general Catholic weekly review; or, to express it in terms which will appeal to many of our readers, we have no organ in America similar to The Tablet in England, and such an organ is quite as much needed here as it is indispensable there. Even the most unfriendly critic of this leading English Catholic weekly will admit that to it the Church in the British Isles owes much of its standing and influence. A periodical of equal merit in America will be of incalculable benefit to religion.

There is still more need of a first-class Catholic weekly periodical in this Western Hemisphere, and a wider field of utility for the same than in England, because with us, non-Catholics as a rule are not only more ready to hear our views, but they are also more eager to have us exert our proper influence in the national and social life. When counselling Father Coleridge, at the time he was planning The Month, Cardinal Newman advocated a periodical which would induce Catholics to take an intelligent interest in public affairs and not live as a class apart from their fellows of other beliefs. His counsel to Catholics in America even more than it applied to England in his day.

We are of a people who respect belief but who value action more. We are going through a period when the most salutary influences of religion are needed to safeguard the very life and liberty and equal rights of the individual, to maintain the home, to foster honesty and sobriety, and to inculcate reverence for authority, and for the most sacred institutions, civil as well as ecclesiastical. We are more responsible than our non-Catholic fellow citizens for the welfare of thousands of immigrants of our own religion who come to us weekly, and for their amalgamation into the national life. We are responsible also for much of the ignorance of religious truth and for the prejudices which still prevail to a great extent, because, satisfied as we are of the security of our own position, we do not take the pains to explain it to others or to dispel their erroneous views.

The object, therefore, of this Review is to meet the needs here described and to supply in one central publication a record of Catholic achievement and a defense of Catholic doctrine, built up by skillful hands in every region of the Globe. It will discuss questions of the day affecting religion, morality, science and literature; give information and suggest principles that may help to the solution of the vital problems constantly thrust upon our people. These discussions will not be speculative nor academic, but practical and actual, with the invariable purpose of meeting some immediate need of truth, of creating interest in some social work or movement, of developing sound sentiment, and of exercising proper influence on public opinion. The Review will not only chronicle events of the day and the progress of the Church; it will also stimulate effort and

originate movements for the betterment of the masses.

The name AMERICA embraces both North and South America, in fact, all this Western Hemisphere; the Review will, however, present to its readers all that interests Catholics in any part of the world, especially in Europe. It will preserve and expand the popular features of The Messenger, namely, the editorial, chronicle, reader or book reviews, notes on science, literature, education and sociology. Special short articles or leaders on current topics of interest, biographical sketches of prominent persons, comments on passing events, and correspondence from international centres, will be among the additional features which the editors hope to make equally popular with the readers of the new Review. Owing to the wide scope of its contents, and its strict avoidance of proselytism and of all unnecessary controversy, it is hoped that the Review will prove attractive, not only to Catholics, but to the large number of non-Catholics who desire information about Catholic affairs.

True to its name and to its character as a Catholic review, AMERICA will be cosmopolitan not only in contents but also in spirit. It will aim at becoming a representative exponent of Catholic thought and activity without bias or plea for special persons or parties. Promptness in meeting difficulties will be one of its chief merits, actuality will be another. Its news and correspondence will be fresh, full and accurate. Courtesy will preside over its relations with the press and other expounders of public sentiment. Far from interfering with any of the excellent Catholic newspapers already in existence, AMERICA will strive to broaden the scope of Catholic journalism and enable it to exert a wholesome influence on public opinion, and thus become a bond of union among Catholics and a factor in civic and social life.

The task of editing this Review has been undertaken at the earnest solicitation of members of the Hierarchy and of prominent priests and laymen. Indeed, not a few non-Catholics have frequently expressed a desire to have such an organ of Catholic thought and influence, and surprise that nothing of the kind has hitherto existed. The Archbishop of New York, in whose jurisdiction the Review will be published, has cordially approved the project. It goes without saying that loyalty to the Holy See, and profound respect for the wishes and views of the Catholic Hierarchy, will be the animating principle of this Review. The board of editors consists of men representing various sections of North America. They will be assisted by eminent collaborators and contributors drawn from all ranks of the clergy and from the laity in every part of the world, some of whose names we publish in this number.

Bureaus of information established in the leading cities of Europe, Mexico, Central and South America will supply

**America is practically unrecognizable from the magazine I went to work for as a Jesuit novice almost 20 years ago.”**

**— Matt Malone, S.J.**



Today, America employs 43 women and men. **1.** Jesuit members of the staff Robert Collins, S.J., Sam Sawyer, S.J., Jim McDermott, S.J., Joe Hoover, S.J., and Ricardo da Silva, S.J. **2.** Robert Collins, S.J. **3.** Molly Cahill and Doug Girardot, a Joseph A. O'Hare fellow. **4.** Sarah Vincent, also an O'Hare fellow. **5.** Members of the staff in the office chapel.

prompt and correct information concerning Catholic interests. Telegraph and cable will be used when needed, and neither labor nor expense will be spared to make AMERICA worthy of its name.

# Cross Catholic Outreach Partners With Pwoje Espwa to Rebuild Homes Destroyed by Haiti Earthquake

Within a few horrifying minutes, the lives of hundreds of Haitian families were literally turned upside down. On Aug. 14, 2021, a massive earthquake struck Haiti's Tiburon Peninsula, causing 2,248 deaths, injuring more than 12,760 people, and damaging hundreds of homes, parishes, schools and medical buildings. It was a day Jim Cavnar remembers very well. As the president of Cross Catholic Outreach, he understood exactly how the disaster would impact Haiti's poorest families.

"The earthquake came without warning, killed indiscriminately, and left scores of shattered lives — and homes — in its wake," he explained. "While it was centered in a part of Haiti that is less populated than the country's capital city, we were on high alert that day because the Tiburon Peninsula contains a lot of makeshift homes, and we knew they would never hold up to an earthquake of that severity." (See related story on opposite page.)

Even before roads had been cleared and damaged bridges could be repaired, Cross Catholic Outreach had found routes to provide earthquake survivors with food and other relief supplies. The ministry continued this emergency relief work for weeks following the disaster, but it also began working with its in-country Catholic partners to determine what kinds of long-term support would be needed. It was then that Cross Catholic Outreach's staff learned something encouraging. The homes it had been building for poor families prior to the earthquake through an in-country partner called Pwoje Espwa (Project Hope) were among the few structures that had remained intact during the tremors.

"We were very impressed by the quality of homes our partner had built. Few sustained any serious damage, while many other cement houses in the area had been reduced to rubble. That proved the importance of our commitment to build simple but high-quality homes through the ESPWA team," Cavnar said. "It also inspired us to expand our plans so we could provide new homes to the families that had lost everything in the earthquake. The quality of Espwa's work will be a comfort to them too. They can be confident knowing they will receive a house that will provide better protection from any major storm or earthquake to come."

As with all of its programs, Cross Catholic



Photo courtesy of Overture International.

*The impact of the earthquake reduced poorly constructed homes to rubble in a few minutes, so Cross Catholic Outreach and Pwoje Espwa — the ministry's in-country partner in Haiti — are using improved construction techniques on the new homes being built.*

Outreach will approach this housing project in a way that blesses families both materially and spiritually, according to Cavnar.

"We believe in integral human development. That is a formal term used by the Catholic Church, but its meaning is actually very simple," he said. "It means we believe spiritual and emotional support must accompany the material aid we provide. We stress that because we know true, lasting change is only possible when we address the needs of both the body and the soul."

Cavnar added that Cross Catholic Outreach feels a sense of urgency and is eager to get its next large-scale housing project underway.

"We'll be launching a campaign soon to get funding for this effort from Catholic donors in the U.S.," he said, "and we are confident a lot of individuals, families and even Catholic businesses will want to participate. No one wants these Haitian

families to be homeless or living in tents because of this disaster. Our housing project will build quality homes at a very reasonable cost using local labor, which also helps support poor families in Haiti through job training and employment. There's not a more impactful or life-transforming gift a donor could give."

***Readers interested in supporting Cross Catholic Outreach's housing program and other ministries to the poor can contribute through the brochure inserted in this issue or by sending a tax-deductible gift to: Cross Catholic Outreach, Dept. AC02086, 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.***



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# US Catholics Play Critical Role in Helping Poor Haitian Families Still Struggling After Major Earthquake

On Aug. 14, 2021, more than 60,700 homes were destroyed and 76,100 damaged by a 7.2 magnitude earthquake. Days later, a tropical storm battered the same area, dumping torrential rain that destroyed crops at the peak of the harvest season.

“Those two devastating natural disasters shook thousands of families to their core and left many wondering if it would ever be possible to rebuild their lives,” confirmed Jim Cavnar, president of Cross Catholic Outreach, one of the leading Catholic ministries serving in Haiti and involved in relief efforts after these events. “It was terrible to see the suffering, to learn about how many lives had been lost and how many homes had been reduced to piles of rubble. Roads and bridges were destroyed, and families were driven into the streets in fear. Fortunately, the Church was in a position to help, and we could join in with the work they were doing to provide help and hope to the families that were suffering most.”

While the destruction caused by the 2021 earthquake was staggering, most Americans were unaware of the disaster because they saw or heard very little about it on the news.

“We work in Haiti, so we understood the scale of the Aug. 14 disaster, but very few American Catholics were aware of what had happened,” said Cavnar. “That’s probably because the earthquake occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, and because a blitz of other international news stories hit during the same week. The disconnect is understandable, but you can imagine how discouraging it was to the earthquake survivors. Thousands had lost family members, homes and possessions, and they wondered if their pleas for help were even being heard.”

Fortunately, Cross Catholic Outreach was aware of the disaster’s impact and remained vigilant, doing whatever it could to provide relief. In the months following the earthquake, it arranged shipments of food, medicines, tarps for temporary shelter, and other important supplies to the areas where the needs of the poor were greatest.

Eventually, the focus of Catholic leaders

Photo courtesy of Overture International.



*Families who were displaced by the Haiti earthquake are finally able to start rebuilding their lives — thanks to an outreach of Cross Catholic Outreach funded by compassionate Catholic donors in the U.S. Much has been accomplished, but more remains to be done.*

working in the hardest-hit areas of Haiti shifted from providing emergency aid to finding solutions to long-term challenges. For example, families had found ways to create makeshift shelters or were huddling under tarps, but they clearly needed more substantial shelter, especially if they had children.

“That’s why constructing housing is our priority now,” Cavnar said. “Once food, water and medical needs are addressed after a disaster, it is essential that we get families out of tents and other primitive shelters and into safe, sturdy homes. The house can have a simple design, but it should be well constructed and secure and meet sanitary needs. Supplying this housing is critical because it restores hope and gives families a foundation for rebuilding their lives. The homes we build are perfectly suited to the areas we serve, and they are designed to address these poor families’ need for shelter and security.”

According to Cavnar, Cross Catholic Outreach has launched this major housing reconstruction project in Haiti, and an in-country ministry team called Pwoje Espwa (Project Hope) will be involved in managing the process to ensure each house is built to a high standard. (See related story on opposite page.)

Based on the way U.S. Catholics have supported previous efforts like these, Cavnar is confident many will again want to join the cause and build homes for these

displaced families.

“I have been involved in ministries to the poor for 30 years and worked on many relief projects like this before. In my experience, Catholics are deeply compassionate people and are always eager to help needy families, particularly in the wake of a disaster,” he said. “They understand how important having a safe home is to their own family, and they sympathize with parents who feel hopeless desperation when their children are suffering and there is nothing they can do to improve their situation. For some, providing a home to a poor family is also a way to show gratitude to God for the blessings he has bestowed on them. Others see it as a tangible way to respond to Christ’s call to love others as you love yourself.”

Sponsoring a home for a needy family is also popular because it produces a tangible impact with long-term benefits, Cavnar said.

“When people give, they want to know their contribution is achieving something specific and will improve someone’s life in a profound way,” he shared. “That is another reason both our disaster relief efforts and our home-building initiatives are so popular. When you donate to those causes, you know your gift is going to produce a significant benefit to the families being helped. In the case of relief efforts, it can literally save a life. With the gift of a home, you restore lost hope and bless a family for many years to come.”

## 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. AC02086, 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.





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# CONVERSATION PARTNERS

# Can seminaries be models for better communication between men and women?

By Kaya Oakes

In 1992, the author John Gray published *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus*. The book, which purported to help men and women communicate, has sold millions of copies. In it Gray posits that men verbally shut down and retreat to their “caves,” whereas women want to talk about their feelings. He also states that women have a silent “points system,” with which they award men for listening, whereas men tend to say one “big thing” and then coast on their banked points, only pretending to listen. Gray’s idea that these traits are based in biology was largely debunked by academics in the fields of communications and psychology, who pointed out that any gendered differences in speech were instead the result of social structures. But the myth that men and women have inherently different ways of speaking and listening persists today.

But while communication differences between genders may not be based on biology, they are real—and so are their effects on how men and women move through society. Dr. Rukhsana Ahmed, chair of the communication department at SUNY Albany and an expert on gender and communications, says that understanding the ways men and women communicate means first acknowledging some socially ingrained differences. A “lack of recognition of basic differences” in communication styles can lead to a cascade of miscommunication and misunderstanding, something Dr. Ahmed says occurs across professional settings.


These misunderstandings can be especially problematic in faith communities, where structural power and gender often go hand in hand. Sometimes this is obvious to those without power, as they struggle to be heard. Sometimes it is not obvious at all because those power structures are so ingrained that those without power do not expect to be heard. But poor communication for any reason can have a significant impact on how effectively our church communicates, both in terms of conveying the good news of the Gospel and in terms of communicating within the community. It is crucial that church leaders are trained to be good communicators, which also means being good listeners. This training is especially important for priests, whose communications skills (or lack thereof) often set the tone for a parish and establish expectations for how the parishioners communicate with their priests and with one another.

## Acknowledging Our Differences


Most priests in the United States are trained in seminaries that exclusively educate men, which means in their classroom debates and discussion they may become accustomed to more traditionally male styles of speaking and listening.

When it comes to differences in male and female communication styles, Dr. Ahmed says it might sound clichéd that women are more emotive and men either “mansplain” or ver-





# The need to build good communication skills between seminarians and women is something Pope Francis has also emphasized.



bally shut down, but these habits are indeed common. From a young age, men and women are socialized in different “speech communities” by their families, further sorted into different speech communities by teachers in education and bosses in the workplace, and also join different speech communities when they socialize with their friends.

How we express ourselves within these communities is affected by how others perceive our gender. For example, “generally women would tend to be more expressive and relationship-focused, where men could tend to be more competitive” within their speech communities, Dr. Ahmed said. Social media, according to Dr. Ahmed, has become another mediating variable in our communication, and because of the way people of different genders communicate online, this too can lead to misunderstandings and miscommunications between men and women.

There are approximately 3,500 seminarians in training for the priesthood in the United States today. There are also nearly 40,000 lay ecclesial ministers working in the parishes those priests will serve, and many of those ministers are women. In most parishes, women make up more than half of the population in the pews; and given population trends, women will likely continue to outnumber men in the United States for some time to come. This means that numerous situations exist in which communications problems can become a factor.

A church that is unwilling to recognize how communications styles might enhance or hinder its ministry will be unable to do the necessary work of addressing them. But a willingness to discuss *how* we discuss is crucial—especially in the formation of the men who will be priests. Committing to this discussion is vital to the formation of a functional, healthy and holy church in the years ahead.

## Learning to Listen

A review of the websites of many American Catholic seminaries reveals two things. First, many Catholic seminaries are still accepting only male students, although there is nothing keeping seminaries from offering degrees to lay students as well as priests; and second, very few women teach in seminaries, even those seminaries that are co-educational. The balance of gender representation among faculty often is better at bigger schools with larger theology departments, which gives seminarians an opportunity to study with women who are experts in topics like the Bible, church history and moral theology. But the majority of seminarians will go into parish work after years of study that, however rigorous, have not included regular classroom conversation with any women about theology or ministry.

For men in seminary, they “probably don’t have experience in an interactional space” shared with women, according to Dr. Ahmed. For this reason, a supportive communication environment in classrooms is crucial. She said that male students often need to learn that a female classmate or professor also has a voice. Their bias may be unconscious, but it also means that male students often need to learn not only to listen, but also to ask questions; they also need to learn to ask women, whether classmates or professors or parishioners, for their thoughts and opinions.

In addition, Dr. Ahmed says men may need to be reminded not to judge women based on how they look or what their backgrounds are, but to instead focus on “dual perspectives” and trying to understand the environment from both points of view. This shift in perspective can help create a more professional context for communication.

Julie Hanlon Rubio is a professor of Christian social ethics at the Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley (where I have also taught), where Jesuit scholastics are educated alongside lay students, many of them women. She said that Jesuit scholastics arrive at the seminary near the end of their formation, whereas lay students, who are also eager to be trained as ministers, are often

## AMERICA'S GUIDE TO CATHOLIC SCHOOL EDUCATION

During the 2021-22 school year, Catholic school enrollment across the United States increased by 3.8 percent, according to the National Catholic Educational Association. The organization also noted that this is “the first increase in two decades and the largest recorded increase by NCEA.” For supporters of Catholic education, these numbers are one of many reasons to hope that Catholic schools still have a vibrant future.

Catholic schools and universities have been a steadfast presence during the difficult years of the Covid-19 pandemic. Even in the midst of a changing world, their identity remains constant and motivated by a faithfulness to Christ. Catholic schools and Catholic universities exist at the intersection of faith and the world. They are not places that exist to shield students from reality, nor are they places where students deal only with secular concerns. They help students process their experience

through the lens of faith with the hope that their work in the world will reflect that.

And when we celebrate Catholic schools and universities we also honor the thousands of faculty members and staff who work endlessly on behalf of their students, as well as the parents who scrimp and save and support the schools in endless ways. (Want to buy some wrapping paper?) And, of course, we celebrate the students who embrace the mission—and remind us of it. And who one day, God willing, will be the ones to continue it.

As a Jesuit ministry, America Media labors alongside our brothers and sisters in Catholic education by providing a trusted, balanced and comprehensive analysis of the latest developments in the church and the world. Together we work to connect Catholics across the globe, to educate people throughout their lives, and to build a better society in the spirit of Christ, our greatest teacher.



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“not quite sure what form that ministry might take.” Many women who pursue a seminary degree will end up teaching in high schools or working in campus ministries at colleges, but the parish jobs many women sought in the 80s and 90s are not as available today. Sometimes, the different timelines in the students’ lives also result in age gaps between male seminarians and the lay female students that can also influence communication styles.

Dr. Rubio says emphatically that her male students have never been dismissive of her and are “incredibly respectful.” As a professor, she places an emphasis on “discussion as a social good.” In her classroom, she highlights the importance of intellectual humility and solidarity, which she says can simultaneously help draw out the less vocal or less confident students, whether they are seminarians or lay men or women. She also encourages students to meet her midway through the semester to talk specifically about their discussion skills. This helps ensure that students who tend to interrupt or talk over others are aware of this tendency and have time to work on better communication while still in the class.

Studying with women, whether as classmates and professors or by reading female authors, will help seminarians to “take those voices into their own theological communication in the future,” Dr. Rubio said. But it is also crucial to remember that women are not just in classes “so men can be better priests,” she said. Because of the diversity of voices and experiences in the classroom, men and women are not only better able to communicate; lay ministers and priests are prepared for “doing sacraments together, doing theology together.”

### **Communication and Clericalism**

Dr. Gina Hens-Piazza, who teaches courses on the Hebrew Bible and the prophets at J.S.T., says that 20 years ago, the school made a commitment to educating students in non-classroom environments “in order to train students in contextual theology.” She says this has dramatically changed communication at the school. J.S.T. students work together outside of the classroom at community field sites and in parishes, where the familiar environment of the classroom disappears and students are confronted by different cultural settings and people with differing personal experiences. Dr. Hens-Piazza says this shift in perspective “undercuts and disrupts the well-learned patterns of the classroom, and students discover how much they need each other for input, insights and support.”

Getting to that point, however, can be a challenge for

some men. This can be attributed, in part, to the enduring problem of clericalism. Too often there is a perception—whether because of ecclesiastical emphasis or a lack of understanding among the faithful—that the priesthood is “above” any role lay people can play in the church, despite the fact that the Second Vatican Council reaffirmed “the priesthood of all believers” in the “Dogmatic Constitution on the Church.”


In an article entitled “Do Women Really Talk More than Men?” the psychologist Catherine Aponte reports on a study that revealed “the amount that people talk is most likely related to the status of the person given the kind of setting in which the conversation occurs.” In a seminary classroom, a man who is training to be a priest will sometimes be seen as having a higher status than his female classmates by a professor or school dean. As a result, clericalism can affect communication in seminary classrooms just as much as it influences communication in churches.

Christopher McMahon, a theology professor who asked that his university not be named, attended an all-male seminary in Pennsylvania but left before being ordained, says that his opportunities for interactions with women during his time in seminary were very limited because there were few women on the faculty and none in class. Instruction on how to foster good communication with women parishioners or parish staff was “generally absent,” he says. As a result, Dr. McMahon said, interactions between female supervisors and seminarians at field sites and in parish settings were “often tense.”

Dr. McMahon said that many seminarians, accustomed to clerical environments in which men were in charge, found it difficult to adapt to communicating with women in leadership. Dr. McMahon recalled working at a summer camp with the seminarians and a group of novices from a women’s religious order. The novices, he says, were “generally older, smarter and more capable” than the seminarians, but the group dynamics were “strangely competitive” and tense because of communication issues.


Dr. McMahon later taught at an all male school before going on to teach in co-educational environments, where, he says, as a lay person who chose not to be a priest, “outside a clerical context my perspective has changed dramatically.” After years of working for women professors as a grad student and later teaching in a co-educational environment, he now finds it much easier to communicate with women in leadership positions, women students and women colleagues. As his communication community expanded beyond an all-male environment (although there were

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# A willingness to discuss how we discuss is crucial—especially in the formation of the men who will be priests.

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a “few bumps along the road”), today, he says of working with women, “I value their leadership far more than I did in seminary.”

As much as this experience of clericalism and its impact on communication might be an issue at some seminaries, other all-male seminaries are finding ways to integrate women into the seminary experience. The Rev. Damian Ference, who teaches at Borromeo Seminary, the diocesan college seminary in Cleveland, says that in both the college and major seminaries in the diocese, “although the seminarians themselves are all male, the seminary communities are not.” At the college seminary, students attend classes three days a week at John Carroll University, a co-educational Jesuit college, where they study with and take classes from women. The seminarians live in an all-male community, but Father Ference says “it is certainly not a monastic environment, although I do believe it is a prayerful one.” He adds that the seminarians at all levels “study with women, learn from women, and minister side-by-side with women at their apostolates and field education assignments.”

Father Ference adds that the need to build good communication skills between seminarians and women is something Pope Francis has also emphasized. In “Ratio Fundamentalis,” the Vatican guide to priestly formation, it is noted that because there will likely be more women than men in most parishes, “the presence of women in the


seminary journey of formation has its own formative significance.”

The Rev. Andrew Turner, who also teaches in the Cleveland seminary, says the seminary recently received a grant from the Lilly Foundation “to better equip pastors, supervisors and parishioners to assist in the integrated formation of seminarians.” One consequence of this grant, Father Turner says, would be improved communication between seminarians and parish staff as well as parishioners as they accompany seminarians during formation.

## **Change From Within**

Some seminary students are taking on the responsibility to work on a solution to the problem of communication issues. Clare Erlenborn, a third-year student at Boston College School of Theology and Ministry, has felt that her communication with seminarians has been “a very good experience of kind of getting to see each other’s vocations being worked out.”

Ms. Erlenborn and a Jesuit classmate recently formed clericalism discussion groups, and it struck her that “we don’t have language” for women’s experiences of clericalism in the Catholic Church. She compares it to the ways white people have had to learn to recognize and deconstruct racial privilege, and says that in her discussion group, they have started to become more aware of microaggressions of



clericalism that happen at the school and to develop a vocabulary to help identify those incidents. She also echoes Dr. Rubio when she says that understanding between men and women in the classroom can only be beneficial to both when they go on to do ministry, and that encouraging communication can help develop friendships that can lead men and women to see one another as “people that we can depend on and go to ask questions.”

Still, many women who attend seminary and try to communicate with male classmates still find communication challenging, especially within the context of vocation. Male lay students have usually discerned their own priestly callings, but women do not have space to talk about their more marginalized place in the church. Erin Bishop, who attended the Jesuit School of Theology at Berkley, says she was good friends with many seminarians, but that conversations about awakenings that happened because of feminist theology, for example, largely took place among women students and outside of classrooms. Ms. Bishop says the seminary did a good job of including her on committees and in writing for journals, but she was included as a lay student, and not specifically as a woman. In hindsight, she thinks the seminary “could have done more for me to help me understand and deepen my own identity as a woman called to ministry.” Improving communication between men and women in the church, she adds, “must prioritize women’s voices and experiences.”

Diane Walter studied at a midwestern seminary where many of her classmates were diocesan seminarians. Many of the priests and lay staff, she says, were good listeners and willing to step in when miscommunication occurred. But she says the diocesan seminarians she encountered talked to women in intrusive and bossy ways that mirrored the culture of clericalism. These men, she says, would sometimes ask inappropriate questions about her motives for being in seminary. As a married woman who could not have children due to endometriosis, she was met with some suspicion. Diocesan seminarians would ask why she was “not at home having numbers of children, or why I was ‘allowed’ to teach high school without having children of my own,” and even went so far as to suggest she should have become a religious sister to “spare her husband the shame” of not having children. Ms. Walter said she hoped the seminarians would realize the pain these questions could cause, but that she never received apologies for these comments, which led to further tension and breakdowns in communication.

Ms. Walter says the diocesan seminarians also did not listen to concerns from lay students about earning an income or maintaining health care while working for the church, and were often dismissive of lay students’ com-

ments in class. Ms. Walter said she believes that priests should be “willing to listen” rather than dismiss “the most basic of human conditions and daily struggles,” and that pastoral work should involve giving people the “confidence to advocate,” which also involves developing an empathetic listening response.

### **Emotions and Empathy**

Renée Roden, who was hired to teach a theater workshop at St. Joseph’s Seminary and College in Yonkers, N.Y., in 2018, says the formation director there told her that part of why she was hired was that it would be beneficial for the seminarians to learn from a woman. And while she adds that many seminarians did not feel communication with women was a problem, being able to “express emotions freely” in the context of theater gave them a sense of relief. Ms. Roden says that, in seminary education, “a system of formation in which you are constantly being screened, scrutinized and evaluated,” the surveillance can undermine “human formation,” and as a result, lead to the loneliness many diocesan seminarians feel.

Anyone who has been a teacher knows that encouraging your students to talk in class is difficult, but encouraging your students to actually listen to one another and take in what the other person is saying can be even more difficult. But it is not impossible. One way to overcome these differences in speech communities is to think of the seminary as a space for creative and collaborative encounter. Dr. Rubio’s idea that the classroom is not a place to prepare students for different jobs in the church but rather for working together in the church is part of this reinvention. So too is Dr. Ahmed’s idea for men to try and understand the seminary environment from a woman’s point of view.

It takes courage for a woman to enter a seminary classroom dominated by male students or to strive for leadership roles in a parish or church where men are in charge. Future priests who demonstrate a willingness to be a listening ear and to practice communicating as an act of understanding can help create the sort of seminary culture that values and lifts up the contributions of women in the classroom or beyond. That can also mean clearer, more transparent, more loving and merciful communication in parishes, and in the broader church and the world—a shift that would benefit all of us.

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*Kaya Oakes, a contributing writer for **America**, teaches writing at the University of California, Berkeley. Her most recent book is *The Defiant Middle*.*

# A Journey of Courage and Honesty

## Evaluating the worldwide synod's first steps

By Robert Choiniere

This summer the first phase of the Synod on Synodality will come to a close. Bishops, diocesan staff and synod coordinators are now synthesizing the hopes and fears, the joys and sorrows, the pains and the graces that have been heard, spoken and shared by Catholics and people of good will from every corner of the world. They will soon add their reports to a growing body of input that, taken together, is the fruit of the largest consultative process in human history. As this unique global experience of listening concludes, there is great opportunity to consider what graces have been poured out, what we have learned and how we can continue the momentum we have created.

When Pope Francis opened the synod, he sought to include everyone, reminding us that we are “all protagonists.” We were invited not as passive recipients but as active participants tethered to the Holy Spirit working in each of our lives. Sharing our deepest hopes and disappointments with one another and with the wider church has often required courage and honesty. Listening to the experiences and opinions of others different from us has been an opportunity to exercise compassion and empathy, to reconsider our sure conclusions and to practice inclusion and reconciliation. Great graces have already emerged simply from creating a space where we could hear one another and be heard.

Together, we learned to recognize and articulate the Spirit's movements in our lives, in the church and in the world. Many parishioners met one another in a new way through honest dialogue about our shared faith community. Still others engaged the marginalized, the poor, the imprisoned, the homeless and those who no longer practice their faith with us. These conversations have often provided perspective, insight and an opening for a further relationship.



CNS photo/Hal Brown, The Monitor

When the synod process began, I gathered a group of over 100 lay volunteers from Jesuit universities and parishes who offered their time and experience to train more than 2,000 parish leaders across the country in the process of spiritual conversation, the method for consultation recommended in the synod preparatory documents. The spirit of honest engagement, the tenderness of the sharing and the commitment to service were a great inspiration.

The trainings themselves were moments of grace, as the facilitators-in-training discussed together their experiences of church. Many exchanged contact information, prayers of support and encouragement for the journey ahead of them. Thousands of listeners, facilitators, notetakers and synod coordinators dove into this new task with enthusiasm, sincerity and zeal. Now they have an abundance of experience to reflect upon.

Over the past month I have spoken with people all over



The entrance procession for Mass at St. Mary of the Assumption Cathedral in Trenton, N.J., on Oct. 17, 2021, as Bishop David M. O'Connell officially began preparation for the world Synod of Bishops on synodality in 2023.

In these ways and more, grace has already been poured out. But like an effective exercise program, empathetic listening must become a routine practice, not a singular activity. As then Bishop Robert McElroy wrote in the July/August issue of *America*, "Once the reports to Washington have been sent, there will be a strong and natural institutional tendency in most dioceses to let the process of synodality at local levels go dormant until after the pope's apostolic exhortation on the universal synod is released in 2024."

Choosing such a course of inaction will certainly "frustrate and stunt" the movement that has been made through the efforts of so many in this recent consultation process as well as the decades of progress made in the areas of collaboration, shared responsibility and lay empowerment since the Second Vatican Council.

Now, while the church is convoked in synod, there is a great opportunity to build upon these graces and strengthen our practice of empathetic listening, communal discernment and co-responsibility. One way


the world about their synodal consultation experience. While the content of their conversations is fascinating, I have also marveled at the shared universal experience and the sense of communion they revealed. I have talked with people from Minnesota and Micronesia, California and Cameroon, Indiana and India, Australia and Austria, and all spoke of the gifts they received through the listening experience that we now share.

This synodal experience now functions as a point of universality similar to the Mass. Anywhere you go in the world you can share in the same eucharistic feast with a Catholic community. This is a powerful witness to our Catholic communion. Now we have another experience of church in common. You can go anywhere in the world and discuss the experience of synodal listening. This shared practice has strengthened our communion and experience of being a universal church.

that dioceses, parishes, universities and other Catholic organizations might continue to build upon this good work is by becoming schools of listening and discernment.

Christian discipleship is life with the Spirit. Karl Rahner, S.J., a primary architect of Vatican II's "Pastoral Constitution on the Church," once described the human person as "the self-communication of God." If we believe that this is the foundation of our operative theological anthropology, then we must take seriously that the Holy Spirit is in relationship with every human heart. A great task of the church is not so much to provide the one correct answer to every possible theological question, but to offer practices, methods and mentoring for discerning the will of the Spirit in our individual and communal lives of faith.

The synod is demonstrating a participatory process of communal discernment for the universal church. This is also an opportunity to further establish discernment as a



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# The synodal experience now functions as a point of universality similar to the Mass.

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cornerstone of the church's life and teaching. This can begin today by continuing the honest and courageous conversations begun in the synod consultations. Parishes, campuses, religious congregations, dioceses and other Catholic organizations could immediately convene sessions online and in person to report on the emerging themes of the consultations and consider together how the Holy Spirit might be prompting them to respond right now.

Parish and diocesan pastoral councils are organs of synodality encouraged by Vatican II to consider the call of the Gospel in light of the "signs of the times" in their local place. Councils can continue inclusive, empathetic listening sessions as a concrete way to practice and teach communal discernment. In this way council members and clergy can deepen their own listening skills and practice of theological reflection and can train the muscles of synodality.

Communal discernment can also develop in simple, creative, inclusive ways. When the pandemic began in early 2020, I started a weekly virtual group meeting with some fellow parishioners called "Breaking Open the Word." Each Saturday morning, we log on, share our prayers for the world, read the Sunday Gospel and engage in a spiritual conversation around the readings. We listen to one another

and learn how to articulate what moved us in the readings. We offer comments on what struck us as we listened to one another, and we ask how the Holy Spirit is calling us to further our discipleship. We have been going strong every Saturday for over two years. It is a new and important practice of faith that has strengthened our community and helped us learn how to listen with curiosity and above all, how to trust that the Holy Spirit is with us.

In addition to communal discernment, clergy and lay leaders can support individual discernment through the practice of spiritual direction. My parish is blessed to have a pool of trained lay spiritual directors and a parish-based spiritual director formation program. Spiritual direction is a valuable and potent ministry of listening and encounter. Through this individual encounter with a spiritual guide, people learn to give language to their spiritual experience and to discern the movement of the Spirit in their lives.

Spiritual direction and other forms of individual spiritual encounter, such as retreat ministry, pastoral conversations and mutual dialogue, demonstrate the potential of a synodal church that recognizes the Holy Spirit as a creative, engaged and dynamic presence in our midst calling us to the fullness of life and trustful surrender to the will of God. In these ways and more, Catholics can work out our synodal muscles and continue our shared pilgrimage of discovery and renewal. If we put in the effort, we can become more and more a vibrant and healthy church that is empathetic and responsive, focused and yet flexible, rooted in tradition, tethered to the Spirit and ready to respond with creativity, engagement and curiosity to the myriad challenges we face.

Over the next two years we can continue to become a synodal church, but only if we choose to practice and build upon the grace that is already being poured out on us in our journey together.

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Robert Choiniere is a professor of theology at Fordham University and the creator of the website [Synodmeetings.com](http://Synodmeetings.com). He served as director of pastoral planning for the Diocese of Brooklyn and as a lay minister in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia and the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston. A former chair of the Conference of Pastoral Planning and Council Development, he is a member of St. Francis Xavier Parish in New York City.

**Father Louis Cameli** on what is missing in synod reports.  
[americamagazine.org/synod](http://americamagazine.org/synod)

# Thurible of Belief

By Tom Delmore

The first church architects  
Were surely schooled in incense—  
Human sensors for vaulted belief.  
Maybe monastically taught.

Above pew, ambo, and altar  
Escape  
Into pungent relief. Surreal  
To beam and heady concrete.

They, on scaffold, could tell  
The where of and which of  
Smells  
Would linger, like fog on the moor  
Only invisible.

Churches are built on worship  
Or close for lack thereof.  
I have held thuribles from on high  
And sniffed the crevasses and crags,  
An addict of God's scent.

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Tom A. Delmore *has written several books of poetry including Child Is Working to Capacity; A Poultice for Belief and Tell Them That You Saw Me but You Didn't See Me Saw. He lives in Bellevue, Wash.*

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# Mrs. Peak's Prayers

How the prayers of my junior high math teacher have helped sustained me far beyond my school years

By Shemaiah Gonzalez

If you were to arrive early to the campus of my junior high and peek through the classroom window of my math teacher, Mrs. Peak, you would witness a quiet and astonishing moment.

You would see Mrs. Peak pull out her wooden desk chair to the middle of the room. You would see her place her open grade book on that chair and then kneel on a small, orange carpet square. Each morning, without fail, you would see my teacher praying over the names in her roll book.

As students, we all knew this. It was spoken of in whispers in the hallways. Even at this Christian school where we were taught and encouraged to pray, we students found her ritual as strange as it was sacred. Mrs. Peak knew that we saw her, as hundreds of students, including my own father, had done during her decades of teaching. But her prayer was not a show. She moved without artifice and with a humility we had not seen in any other person. We knew we were witnessing something holy.

The choice to look so utterly ridiculous could have been motivated only by love. Mrs. Peak knelt there with a posture that seemed to define the word fortitude, as if she knew precisely, in exact terms, that our God would answer her prayers. She believed in things unseen and knew there was a battle going on for our very souls.

My father attended that tiny little Christian school. He told me about Mrs. Peak. The love, care and respect he had for her knew no rival. My father loved Christ very much, but his mental health was always on a precipice. Did it begin with his own abuse? I do not know. But he attempted to balance the monsters that tormented him with alcohol and drugs. The cycle of abuse spiraled until, by the time he died at age 53, he had destroyed nearly all his relationships. There was no one to speak at the funeral his wife held mostly for internet friends who had known only one side of him.

Mrs. Peak knew him. She remembered who he was as a child and who he hoped to be. And she understood the battle that raged within him. She gave his eulogy when no one else, myself included, wanted to. She spoke of the goodness she had seen in him as a child and the remnant that remained in his adulthood.

The kids I knew in Mrs. Peak's math class are all grown up now, too. We are in our late 40s, with children and mortgages and midlife cars. Many of us struggled with our faith through the years, some even falling away for a spell. But in the last two years, when our faith seemed to be on the defensive, it has been those same names, the ones Mrs. Peak whispered in love, who sustained me.

*Melissa and Joe, Gabrielle and Lucas, Rachel and Starlene.*

We might have not talked to each other for years, but as the world turned to chaos, we began to surface—in texts and Facebook groups, in FaceTime calls and snail mail—and as we reunited, we also remembered Mrs. Peak's prayers. We, too, prayed for one another and pointed one another toward Christ and his love and mercy and hope; and in doing so, we sustained one another. There is something truly beautiful about a shared history overlapping with the mystical connection of the body of Christ.

Today Mrs. Peak is in her mid-80s. She is often seen riding her bike through my hometown. We talk on the phone twice a year. The years I do not send her a Christmas card, she will worry. She will send me a note—typed on a typewriter, then pasted into a notecard—asking if all is well. This year, I did not send Christmas cards, but I reached out to her before I received her typed note.

She answered the phone breathless, as she said she

was just arriving home from a weekly visit to Starbucks. She keeps a rigid schedule of prayer, church, exercise and daily visits with friends at local coffee shops. She was glad I called, as she had just asked my junior high English teacher, Miss Miller, whom she meets for coffee once a week, if she had received a Christmas card from me.

During our hour-long call—during which we shared news of each family and student we knew in common, babies born, moves, new jobs—I told her how it has been this small school community that has sustained me throughout the pandemic. I told her of the letters and texts and prayers and support we have passed back and forth among this tiny group.

We know you prayed for us, I told her. “Mrs. Peak,” I whispered, “We still feel those prayers.” We do. We’ve talked about them. How there have been times we do not have the words to pray but her prayers have sustained us.

“It wasn’t just me,” she was quick to say. “All the teachers were praying for you.” And as soon as she said this, I knew it was true. I remember the conversations about faith and identity, about conflict and love. I can still see the tender eye of Mr. Winger, our science teacher, as he watched us file into class each day. Or the same Miss Miller with whom Mrs. Peak had coffee last week who taught me to memorize the entire Letter of James. “Those teachers poured into us,” one of my classmates recently recalled.

I want this for my own children and their classmates, that they will feel the prayers of their community as they navigate a world that views our faith as old-fashioned, ridiculous and even malicious. We know that young people are leaving the faith in droves. And where else will they go? Only Christ has the words of eternal life.

So I pray in the spirit of Mrs. Peak. Although I am not their teacher, I type out the names of all the children in my children's classes. I kneel and whisper each name as I pray. I pray that they will know Christ and his love for them. And I pray that these prayers will help sustain them when they cannot pray for themselves.

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*Shemaiah Gonzalez, a freelance writer, lives in Seattle with her husband and their two sons. Her biography of the Catholic author Brian Doyle will be published by Liturgical Press in Spring 2023.*



# THE STRUGGLE TO LEARN

## How to respond when your students don't

By Anne M. Carpenter

My students know what I am thinking, especially what I am thinking about them. I tell them all the time, though not in so many words, or sometimes in no words at all. They are attuned to my body as it relates to them: tone of voice, physical twitches, facial expressions. My many lectures, words flowing over and through them, pulling them into thought, sometimes, like the undertow of a river, snagging at limbs.

Sometimes I am not saying anything. But this is data, too: there are things I do not say, as I stand there and choose what I want to enrich in a student's guess or comment or question. I apply my comments like gold filigree—delicate, specific, spare. After all, I cannot say everything. And students cannot learn everything at once. I have a particular way of pausing, or so I am told, where I seem wholly absorbed in thinking through what we are saying to one another. I stop and I think about it. I say nothing. I'm there and far away. Into the silences, students read tacit admissions and omissions of all kinds. I am a book that they read again and again.

Aware of this dynamic, I work hard to let go of any tiny resentments that can build in the back of a professor's head and then be read by those in front of it: *Why do you not*

*read? I catch myself thinking. Why do you not listen? Why do you not know this thing you have been told? Why are you not curious? Why do you refuse my passion with your gestures of indifference?*

My feeling is felt by them, mediated through the veils of their experience. That they intuit my feelings is the most important thing for me to remember. And remembering it means that I must let go of what I had wanted to happen during our time together, or what I had imagined would take place. Maybe I thought that reading Irenaeus would lead us to reflect on how bodies are necessary for temporality, but really they did not read Irenaeus at all. Maybe I forgot that we humans have not thought about bodies all that much apart from our anxieties about them. So I should ask, "Do you ever think about what it's like to have a body?" And continue: "What *is* it like? What do you think of when I mention the human body?" We will not get so far in Irenaeus, but I think he would be pleased. I can ask any student my new question, even if they did not do the reading.

Our struggle is to learn, which is a work, a deed. A working, *energēmatōn*, in that peculiar usage in Paul's letters: "There are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone" (1 Cor 12:6). Learning is a



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working that I can force upon no one who does not want it.

Students often do not want to be in my classes. They are busy, immensely busy. They can be lazy (as we all can be). They can be utterly marooned by years and years of education whose purposes and tasks and quality can be rather, let us say, various and often opaque. They have made it to college, but they are weary already. Often enough, students are not at all interested in my topic, which is theology. But Catholic institutions understandably require theology courses, and so here they are, and here I am. And one of us at least is *excited about religion*. And maybe by the end of the semester, more of us.

This brings me to a kind of madness. The madness of a broken heart, one that knows that it wants everything, a wanting that is a taste of a pure desire to know. And this heart that wants everything can want nothing *for* anyone. I cannot make people desire what I desire. So it is the madness of a kind of love, one pierced by its mysterious futility. As in a line from “King Lear”: “As mad as the vex’d sea; singing aloud.” And I sing and sing and sing: Christ before me, Christ behind me, Christ in me, in this futile heart exposed.

It is hard not to turn to students who do not want to be there and to wish that they were someone else. Someone

who did not want to extract a grade from me, or to merely survive my class (survive me). They read me, but I read them, too: You who stare, do you wonder with me or wonder at me? Do you wonder, in this moment, anything at all? Am I not a subject and an object—strange, lovely, terrible?

But it is unforgivable, I think, for me to really wish that my students were different than they in fact are. It is unfair to want them to be some *other* students. This is different than expecting much from them, which I continue to do. It is not the same because the wish for them to be different is disappointed before we even begin, and it remains disappointed. They will know. And I will have forsaken them, though maybe not out loud.

I cannot reach what I never search for. I cannot bring into the fold of knowledge the lamb I never find. I cannot scaffold upward from some “whence” I never discover. And so I try to let go, and I go forward to meet my students as they are. I have a job to do, which is to build those scaffolds that help my students reach what they seek, that help them climb to the heights we seek together. The unforgivable thing would be the refusal to go after the lost students, and it would be the cost of such a refusal. The unforgivable thing is to wait for students to be some stranger that I once imagined them to be, someone that they do not know, someone that they are not.

Here I grant a hundred million caveats to my fellow teachers about how hard we work, about how there is no time, about how we must make decisions about what is most important and what is not. I grant these and many others. And I reply with this one: that, as a Catholic and as a theologian, I am not allowed to deny the real. I am not *allowed*. For the real is God’s. And my students are as real as it gets. Their struggles, their joys, their boredom, their pain. All of it. And everything in our glorious, miserable, mystical, disappointing cosmos of triumphs and mediocrities, this world on fire, this mess—including myself—is divine in origin and divine in end. Every thing and every person in front of me is a mysterious instrument of the glory of God. (O Lord of my passion and my futility, you reign even here.)

This, then, is the truly Catholic moment, truly cosmic in scale. The breath of eternity in any breath at all. To look upon the world as it in fact is, and to hear, “Be still and know that I am God!” (Ps 46:11).

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Anne M. Carpenter is an associate professor in the department of theology and religious studies at Saint Mary’s College of California. She has written scholarly essays in journals like *Modern Theology* and *Nova et Vetera*, and has written popular essays for *Church Life Journal* and poetry for *Macrina Magazine*.

# The Jesuit Guide to Teaching

## *Tips for a new teacher*

By Ryan Duns

Nearly a decade ago, I composed this list of “best practices” for The Jesuit Post to help new teachers when they went into the classroom. I wrote with an eye to high school teaching; but as I re-read the advice, I think it applies to grammar school and college students as well. I have edited a few of them to make them sharper.

Let me emphasize: These are based on my own experiences in the classroom. If I have been a successful teacher, it owes much to the quality of students I have been privileged to teach, my own personality and the sage advice of wise teachers. To each of these recommendations, then, I would add an Ignatian *tantum quantum*: To the extent that this is helpful, use it. To the extent that it is not, ignore it. I’m not a guru, just a guy who had to learn (often by failing) to make his way in the classroom!

### Category No. 1: the ‘Pay Attention to Them’ Division

- Contrary to popular stereotypes, teenagers are not shallow. They just don’t know they are deep...yet. It’s your responsibility to uncover latent gifts and hidden depths. They’re there.

- Don’t be afraid to ask profound questions. Develop strategies to talk about sensitive issues, but have the courage to engage them. In addition to course content, you are teaching a style of thinking and dialoguing that our world needs today. Teaching students how to listen, to think critically and reflectively, and to respond respectfully: this is teaching them a way of being human.

- Take the time to read and comment on written work. Actively engaging with their work will allow you to learn about them and, by signaling your interest in their work, provide an opening for further conversations.

- Remember that the smallest unit in the classroom is not the student. It is the sub-group of students. Watch how they arrange themselves into cliques. A lot of acting-out behavior isn’t directed toward you so much as it is an attempt by the student to secure a place in the sub-group. As you look upon your classroom and see how the students subdivide themselves, keep an eye on the margins and frontiers. It’s easy to want to be the popular teacher and get in with the popular kids.

- Go to sporting events, attend cultural performances, chaperone dances and moderate clubs. If you take an inter-



Dan Gill

Ryan Duns, S.J., has taught both high school and college students.

est in students, they are more apt to be interested in what you're teaching. Do not forget the kids on the margins—some just need a little coaxing to help them find their tribe.

- These kids live a great deal of their lives behind screens. Do whatever you can to get them to engage with you, or one another, in a healthy way.

### **Category No. 2: the 'Know Yourself, Be Yourself' Division**

- True, nobody knows *you* like you know you. But you can always know yourself better. And the better you know yourself, the less you'll be inclined to foist your foibles onto your students (and fellow teachers). The Oracle at Delphi's counsel remains sound: Know thyself!

- Don't abuse your power over them. Instead, use your power as a role model and guide to empower them to discern, and to embrace, who they are called to become. One word of encouragement, one gesture of support, may be all the encouragement a student needs on that day to persevere.

- Do not make them the center of your life, because you are not the center of their lives. They are important to you, but you have to remember who is at the heart of your life. I pray before bed each night so that I fall asleep thinking of the One who is the center of my life. I'd suggest such a practice to anyone. Who is at the heart of your heart? Let this be your center of gravity.

- Each day, as you prepare your lessons, you are setting the table for your students. Many are picky eaters to start, so resign yourself to serving chicken nuggets and fries at first. With grace and patience, you'll have them eating sushi, filet and drinking the fine wines of your discipline by the end of the semester. A semester, or a year, is a long banquet. Take your time and savor it.

- You will not be a living legend at the end of your first week. Or, for that matter, your first year.

### **Category No. 3: the 'Technical Teacher Tricks' Division**

- Craft assignments to help them discover. Stretching them is good, especially if you encourage them and build their confidence. This is a generation afraid of being wrong. Embolden them to ask a good question and to risk answering it. If they get it right, celebrate; if they get it wrong, teach them to laugh at their mistakes and show them how to correct their thinking.

- Students lose homework. They don't lose old tests. If you recycle tests, be prepared for them to cheat.

- They cheat. Don't take it personally. Don't make it easy, either: experiment with novel essay prompts, new

quiz questions, different versions of tests. It takes time, but I'd rather spend time constructively than waste time following up on academic integrity issues.

- Transparency is your friend. If your school uses an online grade book parents can access, update it frequently. If there are problems with students, let the parents know. Younger students (freshmen and sophomores) probably need ongoing assessment and, therefore, lots of grades. For college students, be sure to be in touch with the student's adviser if you sense something awry.

- Don't yell. It adds negative energy to the environment, and it's a sign you've lost control.

- We all know what it is like to have to work when we're not feeling well. Remember, too, that kids can feel tired and run-down. Give them the benefit of the doubt—if a kid is looking drowsy or unwell, lay off.

- It's better to over-prepare than to under-prepare.

- Technology does not a teacher make. Fads and gadgets cannot take the place of a good teacher. Technology is a tool, not a replacement.

### **Category No. 4: the 'Love Them' Division**

- Love them. Long after they have left your classroom, years after they have forgotten the content of your course, they will remember you. You are, whether you like it or not, assuming a role in their life's story. Will you contribute a chapter or a footnote? Will you allow yourself to be a major character or will you play but a supporting role? Your loving support will beget within them their own freedom to take risks and to discern their life's calling.

- Auntie Mame said: "Life is a banquet, and most poor suckers are starving to death." Like cooking, teaching is an art. Give your whole heart to it and know that—though each day's lesson may not turn out as you expected or hoped—you're giving it your best and that your students will be fed. Sometimes they don't even know they are hungry; but with the right enticement, you'll find that they're quite eager to "tuck in" and taste what you've prepared.

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## **JESUIT SCHOOL SPOTLIGHT**

*Jesuit School Spotlight is underwritten in part by Jesuit high schools of the USA East Province of the Society of Jesus.*





# *The Inklings Told Stories to Save Lives*

By Rachel Lu

Alamy

Envy is a sin, but it can be hard not to feel a twinge just looking across the Atlantic, contemplating the great tradition of English storytelling. Even in childhood, I wondered why so many of my favorite books involved tuppence candy, seaside holidays and school children racing home for tea. My girlhood shelves were stuffed with volumes from Roald Dahl, Beatrix Potter, Robert Louis Stevenson, J. M. Barrie and Lewis Carroll. With my own children, I have also discovered the works of Arthur Ransome, J. K. Rowling and Hillaire Belloc. There are

some fine American children's authors too, but somehow the old country seems to have the edge.

At the center of this great pantheon, we find the Inklings. For generations now, these great Oxford storytellers have drawn the whole world to their crackling hearth. C. S. Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia* have sold more than 100 million copies worldwide. J. R. R. Tolkien's novels, by some estimates, have sold an astonishing 600 million copies. Both authors have been translated into more than 40 languages. They continue to



J. R. R. Tolkien, left, and C. S. Lewis were the two most famous members of the Inklings, an informal literary club that met at Oxford in the mid-20th century.

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provide rich content for film and television, as we see in the new Amazon series based on *The Lord of the Rings*.

They led an immense number of souls to Jesus Christ. Passionate fans will sometimes insist that Tolkien's work is "not Christian allegory," which is true enough as far as it goes. Unlike, say, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, it was not meant to be explicitly allegorical. Nevertheless, Tolkien's work is deeply suffused with his deeply Catholic sensibilities, and readers do absorb those, whether or not they recognize the implications. As an adult convert to the faith, I find it remarkable how often I hear both Lewis and Tolkien mentioned by fellow converts as critical influences. Neither has been canonized (and Lewis was a member of the Church of England), but as modern-day evangelists they are simply unrivaled.

How did they do it? Who *were* the Inklings? The second question may help us to answer the first. The Inklings is the name of an informal literary club that met at Oxford in the mid-20th century. From roughly 1933 through 1949, they gathered each Thursday night in Lewis's rooms at Magdalen Hall to hear and critique one another's work. Compositions were read aloud by their authors. Discussion and critique would then follow. As intimate friends, the Inklings shared many other favorite pastimes: taking long walks, giving or attending lectures, eating and drinking together at the local pub. Like hobbits and Narnians, they loved their simple pleasures. The real work

got done at the Thursday night meetings, however. In those hours, their dynamic friendship flowed over into something transformative.

Beyond the most famous two members, a few others are worthy of mention. Charles Williams, an editor at Oxford University Press, had a sanguine temperament and a luminous mind. His death in 1945 was a particularly sore blow to the group. Warren Lewis, the elder brother of Clive Staples, was a dedicated member who played a particularly invaluable role by keeping careful notes on the Thursday meetings across the years. Owen Barfield, an old friend of C. S. Lewis, resided in London but dropped in on the club whenever he was able. Both Catholics and Protestants participated, but all were united in a quest to defend and revitalize Christian culture in a world that seemed to be abandoning it.

They were not especially well-traveled or urbane. They came from ordinary middle-class families. Except perhaps for Williams, none was particularly known for personal charisma. On some level, the Inklings were just a clique of fusty old English intellectuals, possessed of none of the savvy instincts that we associate today with "influencers." But if the club itself was not diverse, the readership certainly has been. Somehow these men transcended their own times and circumstances, translating Christian ideas into a language that everyone wanted to hear. There are lessons here for writers and creative artists, and indeed for *all* Christians who would place

their gifts and talents in God's hands, to be used for building the kingdom. The Inklings had a talent for friendship, but also a particular genius for making old things new. We need to relearn this art.

From the start they had a strong attraction to old things, not only within the Christian tradition but also outside of it. The friendship between Tolkien and Lewis first blossomed when, as Oxford colleagues, they discovered their shared love of the Norse language and mythology. Lewis was not yet a Christian at that time. Some of the Inklings, notably Barfield and Williams, had serious interests in non-Christian spiritualism and the occult. All of them were deeply interested in history, mythology and the intricacies of language. Undoubtedly, Christian faith was important to these writers, but worship was not the primary glue that held them together. They were humanists. Their love of old things was not fundamentally reactionary, though many of their contemporaries surely viewed them that way. For the Inklings, examining different myths, cultures and languages was worthwhile because each might yield unique insights into the human condition. All people, in their various ways, are searching for beauty and truth.

Unfortunately, evil is still very real, and the Inklings certainly understood this. Their stories have an epic quality in part because evil is personified in such compelling ways, in the White Witch, the hosts of Mordor or the devilishly genial



# For generations now, these great Oxford storytellers have drawn the whole world to their crackling hearth.

Uncle Screwtape. Evil is a serious thing; it crushes souls, defaces beautiful things and sometimes destroys worlds. At the same time, evil is immensely personal in these stories. This is especially clear in some of Lewis's works, such as *The Screwtape Letters*, *The Great Divorce* or *That Hideous Strength*, all of which delve deeply into the psychology of temptation. These works are simultaneously arresting and chilling, because readers recognize themselves in the characters that are damned (or at least in evident spiritual danger). Tolkien, too, had a keen understanding of the psychology of sin. Hobbits can play a heroic role in these stories in part because they are aware of their smallness and weakness in the face of immense evil. Because they are willing to acknowledge their limitations and sometimes ask for help and forgiveness, they ultimately withstand certain forms of corruption that overwhelm the great and good.

We love the Inklings in part because they can present evil so persuasively, without losing their enduring sense of supernatural hope. Tolkien's hobbits eat *lembas* and invoke Elbereth through the darkest hours of

night; Aslan reliably appears whenever Narnia is in great need. The Inklings knew how to juxtapose darkness and hope in part because they were deeply familiar with grief, terror and despair. As children, both Tolkien and Lewis lost their mothers to diabetes and cancer respectively. As soldiers, they experienced the horrors of the trenches at the Somme. The Inklings' most productive period as a club was the early 1940s, when Williams was able to join them precisely because German bombing had driven him out of London. Warren Lewis was himself evacuated from Dunkirk; Tolkien, who had a son in the Royal Air Force, viewed that war in the bleakest of terms, as a sign that humanity was being utterly effaced by malevolent machines. He was particularly bleak in the wake of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which he viewed as resounding confirmation of his dark diagnosis. Shortly after those events, he submitted his first manuscript for *Fellowship of the Ring*.

"A star shines on the hour of our meeting," says Frodo to the elf, Gildor Inglorion, in the early chapters of *The Lord of the Rings*. The phrase readily

comes to mind when one considers the meeting of Tolkien and Lewis, as fellow faculty members in an Oxford that was growing increasingly hostile to scholars with their convictions and sensibilities. Lewis, as a Christian-friendly unbeliever, was still in need of a like-minded friend to help him take the final steps to conversion. Tolkien, for his part, needed encouragement to seek larger audiences for his epic fantasy. A scholarly mentor had warned him that his colleagues would laugh him off the campus if he presented his invented languages, elves and dragons as anything more than bedtime stories for his own four children. None of that sounded implausible in an era that, much like our own, seemed increasingly skeptical of miracle and myth. Had Tolkien never met Lewis, the world might never have known *The Lord of the Rings*.

Friendship was the magic ingredient that enabled these men to convert a private sense of alienation into a shared sense of mission. Their work was cut out for them because inter-war Britain was thoroughly demoralized. Pews were emptying. Traditional religion was widely scorned, especially by the intellectual classes. As in our own day, religious believers of this period had a sense that they were living in the crumbling edifices of a once-great Christian culture. They fretted about the "disenchantment" of modern life and the collapse of virtue and honor. For some traditionalists, these kinds of fears can give rise to paranoia and insularity. The Inklings managed to avoid those pitfalls. They did this partly through their friendship, which gave them motivation and encouragement in their creative labors. Beyond

that, their Christian faith gave them steady confidence that the forces of Hell would ultimately be vanquished. As Frodo might say, they cannot conquer forever.

This last point especially must be recovered, if today's Christians hope to imitate the Inklings. The challenges of our own day may not seem quite so uniquely terrible when we set them next to the horror of the Blitz, or the bloody and muddy trenches of France in 1916. Even so, the world remains deeply troubled. For Christian believers, it often seems that our feeble efforts to evangelize are fruitless, or even ridiculous. No one is interested in elves anymore. No one needs our funny, old-fashioned ideas. Pope Francis has urged the Catholic faithful to go forth and convert the world, but our numbers seem so few and our talents so slender. We feel radically unequal to this task.

Jesus' apostles presumably felt the same way. So did the Inklings. All through their books, we meet weak, flawed characters who are forced to step up in an hour of need. English schoolchildren win battles and defeat witches; humble hobbits prevail against dragons and hordes of monsters. Everyone loves an underdog, of course, but these tales feel more meaningful than a standard superhero film because their authors had their eyes on a deeper set of truths. Sin and corruption are real, but salvation is still available. They knew, as Tolkien explained to Lewis in the early years of their friendship, that the Christian story is the truest story, of which all others are echoes. When all appears to be lost, we always have recourse to

the deep magic from the dawn of time.

Stories can be especially powerful for the work of evangelization because they are told by one person to another. The teller must work to translate his ideas into something his listener will find compelling. Christ taught in parables, and at the Thursday night meetings in Magdalen Hall, authors were expected to read their work aloud to a listening audience. This was their quest: translating old ideas into new forms so that new audiences could hear them. Their efforts paid rich dividends. We could use more such laborers.

Even Americans might give it a try. Our modern media landscape places immense pressure on creative

people to stay "relevant," bending and twisting with the precise rhythms of their own moment in time. Sometimes it might pay to turn down that ambient noise for a while, listening more intently to an older tune. Many people told Tolkien that his stories would never sell; several hundred million copies later, those people owe him an apology. The audience was there, hungry for myth and meaning. It is still there. As long as this world endures, there will always be more stories to tell.

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*Rachel Lu is a freelance writer and instructor in philosophy. She lives in St. Paul, Minn.*



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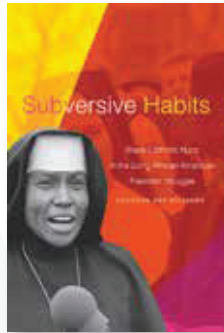
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## Afterlife

By Diana Marie Delgado

I am no longer afraid.  
I live with light now.  
Every morning  
one small bead  
appears on my collarbone  
like a necklace.  
I have been dead for years.  
My son was never born.  
A grape, he sleeps  
behind my intestines.  
He is a color I have  
never thought of.  
Thrown from the temple,  
I am where I'm going,  
never having to step  
on the ground, moving  
through this world  
until I shatter.  
I am God  
in his grave,  
kind & always  
in love.

Diana Marie Delgado is a poet and the literary director of the University of Arizona Poetry Center. Her poetry collections include *Tracing the Horse* and *Late-Night Talks With Men I Think I Trust*. Website: [Dianamariedelgado.com](http://Dianamariedelgado.com).



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## The Artist at Work

It is hard to imagine a better companion on a stroll through an art museum than Jed Perl. Here is a critic with an encyclopedic knowledge of the aesthetic techniques, genres and developmental arcs of art through the ages—to say nothing of his storehouse of anecdotes and examples. But Perl is also a down-to-earth mensch who never lets his vast learning swamp his humanity or the warm common touch of his writing. In his latest book, *Authority and Freedom: A Defense of the Arts*, Perl takes us on a lively tour through the mental museum of his mind and his many gathered notions on the age-old interplay of forces “that pit the authority of a tradition against the freedom of the individual artist.”

As he did in his two-volume masterwork on the artist Alexander Calder—*The Conquest of Time* and *The Conquest of Space*—Perl likes to divide his work into dichotomous categories roomy enough to accommodate his wide reading and ravenous curiosity.

The authority-versus-freedom construct has been a staple of aesthetics ever since Apollo, god of order, and Dionysus, god of ecstasy, squared off on Mount Olympus, and it remains an effective paradigm through which to examine any age of art.

Our age, according to Perl, is one in which “the idea of the work of art as an imaginative achievement to which an audience freely responds has been replaced” by the increasingly inexorable “assumption that a work of art should promote a particular idea or ideology.” He argues that the pressure for artists to “perform some clearly defined civic or community service” can reduce a work of art to being a kind of “comrade in arms to some supposedly more stable or socially significant aspect of the world.”

Fortunately, audiences of late have begun to weary of the simplistic “social justice” box-

checking and treacly virtue-signaling on offer in this time of what

feels like the “kindergartenization” of our culture. But woe to the career prospects of the artist who does not want to be part of what Joan Didion would call a “dictatorship of good intentions.”

Into all this Perl lobes a bracing and much needed corrective in the form of the central battle cry of *Authority and Freedom*:

I want to release art from the stranglehold of relevance—from the insistence that works of art, whether classical or contemporary, are validated (or invalidated) by the extent to which they line up with (or fail to line up with) our current social and political concerns. I want to convince a public inclined to look first for relevance that art’s relevance has everything to do with what many regard as its irrelevances.

## Authority and Freedom

A Defense of the Arts

By Jed Perl

176p \$20

“No matter how the world encroaches on the artist,” Jed Perl insists, “the artist... must stand firm in the knowledge that art has its own laws and logic.”

Perl makes a strong case that the itch to be fashionably relevant rarely creates art as powerful as work that emerges from the dynamic tension between an individual artist’s quest for expressive freedom and the innate authority of the “fundamentals” of his or her art form.

“No matter how the world encroaches on the artist,” Perl insists, “the artist in the act of creation must stand firm in the knowledge that art has its own laws and logic.” It is these laws and this logic that he believes form the “authority” that each artist’s will-to-freedom must push against. As he demonstrates in the many apt and entertainingly described examples he presents, this is the crucible from which great art emerges.

Touring us through a gamut of genres, historical epochs, famous personalities and artistic disciplines, Perl is as convincing in his “artist-versus-her-art” postulations as he is eclectic in his choice of evidence. One minute he has the writer Flannery O’Connor vowing that the best art is “wholly concerned with the good of that which is made.” The next minute he is discussing 1972 concert footage of the singer Aretha Franklin to show us the “solitude of an artist at the height of her powers.”

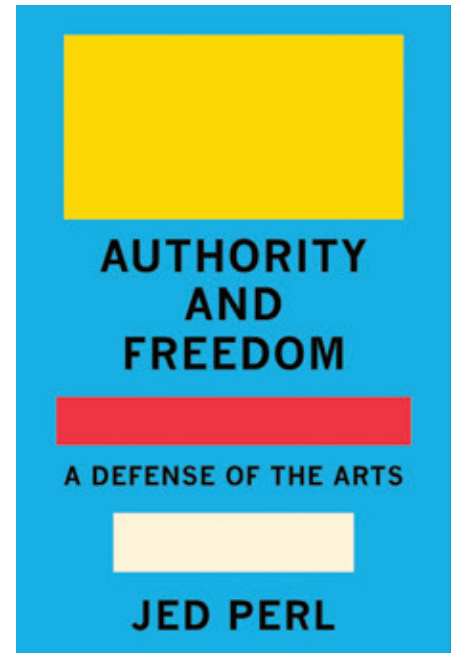
Perl’s authority-versus-freedom analysis of Michelangelo’s “licentious use of classical vocabulary” in his design of the vestibule of the Laurentian Library is every bit as illuminating as his many dashed-off gems, including what is, for my money, the best definition I’ve ever heard of jazz: “a daz- zlingly authoritative response to the

relatively simple authority of a tune or a song.” (John Coltrane’s rendition of the ditty “My Favorite Things” from “The Sound of Music” comes to mind.) All this enjoyable variety is put in the service of Perl’s abiding belief in the lone artist *working* at her art rather than using art to fashion an ideological message.

In one of his best chapters, “Planning and Making,” Perl uses Paul Taylor’s book *Dancemakers* to drive home the point that whether the artist is a cutting-edge, modern-dance choreographer like Taylor, or one of the many Renaissance masters about whom Perl shares insights throughout this book, artists are first and foremost *makers*: toilers who turn out a product, the practical imperatives of which must be folded into every hard day’s work.

Perl quotes from the letters of Giuseppe Verdi to show us how this colossus of composition was, indeed, a “maker,” a worker who simply talked shop. “Please also ask the conductor to keep an eye on the dance rehearsal from time to time to ensure the dances remain at the tempi I have asked for,” Verdi says in language as canny and chatty as any post-rehearsal email dashed off yesterday. Anyone who has had enough direct contact with gifted creators—especially creators in the process of doing their work—can attest to the fact that when the greats of the theater, art, dance or music talk to each other, it is rarely about grandiose concepts or the high twaddle of ideology. They talk about the details, the “tempi,” the nuanced nuts and bolts of technique.

The best and most moving chap-



ter (in a book that is unusually moving for a work of art criticism) is “The Idea of Vocation.” Here Perl returns the word *vocation* to its spiritual if not altogether religious underpinnings, showing us how holy the “planning and making” of his previous chapter can be in the hands of an artist determined to achieve a new aesthetic freedom from the “authority” of his or her established ways of working. “Even an artist as determinedly secular as Picasso saw echoes of religious vocation in his experience as artist,” Perl writes as he takes us through the creation of a painting that has come to be thought of as one the great works of “social justice” art: Pablo Picasso’s “Guernica.”

Perl reminds us that the initial impetus for this work was a culmination of several smaller studies done over years by Picasso, all centered on “the theme of the artist in his studio,” the very authority-versus-freedom crucible Perl comes back to time and again. Yes, the painting became “almost universally accepted as an indictment of humanity’s inhumanity,” and is without question localized in the April 1937 bombing by the Nazis

of the small town for which the painting was named, but Perl contends that “the key to its greatness was precisely Picasso’s rejection of a journalistic or propagandistic approach” to his actual work on the painting.

Perl’s book is so full of these sorts of avuncular museum-companion insights that it should be

required reading for every young person who wants a life in the arts. In a day and age when young people are often averse to trusting in the incremental progress and spiritual development that comes from pushing one’s personal urge for expressive freedom up against the hard authority of the technical limits of an art form, Perl’s work shows that great art is far more likely to emerge from that fission than from the “will-to-relevance” that animates the creative work of so many social-justice careerists who are now enjoying their brief moment in the sun.

“Before everything else the artist must be a rationalist and a pragmatist,” Perl echoes, loud enough to make a docent scowl, “The job must get done!” There is a reason the paintings that grace the museum walls Jed Perl knows and loves, and sagely leads us through in *Authority and Freedom*, are called *works of art*.

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## Thirsting for Love and Meaning

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For life on Earth and for human life in particular, water is essential. About 71 percent of the Earth’s surface is water. Similarly, the human body is composed of 70 percent water. While the human body can endure a month without food, it can go only a week without water. Likewise, all plants and animals need water to survive. In other words, all of creation depends upon water.

Katy Carl’s debut novel, *As Earth Without Water*, presents a trinity of epigraphs before its story begins. The first is from Psalm 142: “I stretched forth my hands to Thee: my soul is as earth without water unto Thee.” The other two quotes—about thirst and vision—come from the writer Marcel Proust and the painter Matthew Kirby. But the psalm is the true thesis, or lynchpin, for the stories of the novel’s main characters, Dylan Fielding and Angele Solomon.

The psalm tells readers up front that this is a story about people like the psalmist, reaching out a hand—oftentimes blindly or out of desperation—to God. The characters do not always know this, of course, like any person who seeks understanding and meaning in life. But something in the soul knows. The soul knows its source. And it knows that it cannot survive without “Thee,” just as life on Earth cannot survive without water.

Carl’s novel is about coming “through the waters” of life with all its floods and storms. At the same time, it is about slaking thirst—finding a well in the desert. Or, like the Gospel story of the woman at the well, it is about understanding that there is such a

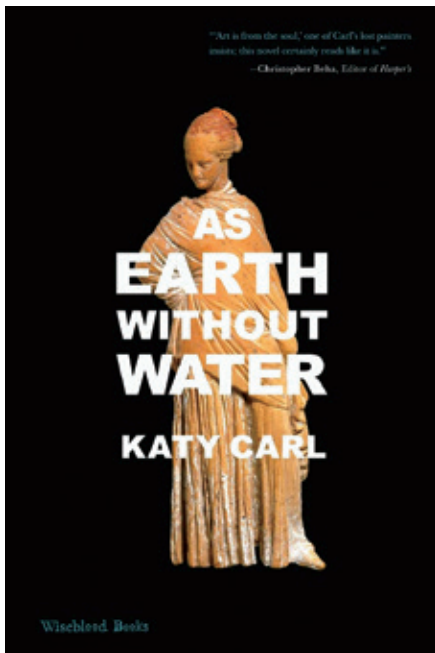
thing as living water.

Dylan and Angele, the story’s narrator, met one another in college, where they both studied art (painting, specifically). Moving back and forth in time from when the two knew each other in school to when they studied abroad in Italy to a period spent living (and struggling) in New York, then back to Chicago, then to a monastery and then to the present, the story covers a lot of ground. Readers piece together the period of young adulthood in which Dylan and Angele have been seeking meaning in their lives, looking for it in different cities and spaces. Both of them are seeking a true home, a sense of belonging and true love. They seek to be seen and known.

For both of these characters and for the book as a whole, water is a focal point. Water can represent new life, but also destruction. It can signal being made clean, and yet also emptiness. In Christianity, water can bring to mind anything from the flood and Noah’s ark to Moses parting the Red Sea, or John the Baptist telling his followers that he will baptize with water but the one coming after him will baptize with the Spirit. Then there is Christ on the cross whispering, “I thirst.” And there is his time in the desert when he was tempted—in a place with very little water.

When readers meet Angele early on in the novel, in July 2010, they learn that she has sold her artistic soul to an ad agency in Chicago—something she said she would never do. Dylan unexpectedly shows up to her office after a long period spent apart, which brings old memories to the surface for Angele. But before those are explored, the story flashes forward to November 2015. This time, the setting





**As Earth Without Water**

By Katy Carl  
Wiseblood Books  
232p \$14

is in a monastery in rural Kentucky, where Dylan is a novice with the name Thomas Augustine.

Dylan and Angele’s bond, though it has changed form over the intervening years, is centered on their shared passion for painting. As the story flashes back once again to July 2010, Angele thinks to herself that “there is love or something like it in brushstrokes.” This is another theme throughout the novel, as Carl considers the ways that acts of creativity, like painting (and all true art) participate in something divine.

Both Angele and Dylan have a deep longing to create something lasting and to be part of this sacred artistic tradition, though they might not think of it in those terms. They simply feel a deep tug pulling them upward and at the same time inward. In one of the

chapters that takes readers back to Dylan and Angele’s semester studying in Italy, their beloved instructor, Signora, admonishes Angele. (At the time, Angele is considering quitting painting because she thinks Dylan is the better artist).

Signora says: “Think of Caravaggio and Artemisia Gentileschi. She was not less capable, she may have been more so: and then consider what radical limitations she had to work against. Consider what she achieved despite them, because of them, because of her need to struggle. Can you justify, to yourself, doing less?”

For a long time, it seems, the answer is yes. Angele can justify to herself that she is not cut out to be an artist and that her work at the ad agency is necessary, even though her soul senses this is a lie. Much later in the novel, Angele says, “There aren’t new worlds to build. There’s only this one to do with it what we can.” When she says this, she is much more assured of her place in the world and of her limitations, but also her strengths. She is also no longer afraid.

This gets at another one of the novel’s themes: freedom. In the middle of the story, Angele wonders, “If the freedom we knew then was not freedom, but mere liberty, then what must real freedom be?” Here’s where art, once again, provides some of the answers. She recalls Ruskin’s *The Elements of Drawing*, a text that Dylan and Angele read during their studies. It explains, “It is easy to draw what appears to be a good line with a sweep of the hand, or with what is called freedom; the real difficulty and masterliness is in never letting the hand be free, but keeping it under entire control at every part of the line.”

Both Dylan and Angele must learn this lesson with some difficulty. Although it was part of an introductory course, it is hardly simple. The two characters realize that it might appear to be easy to “draw a good line” or live a good life—a life of meaning—but in fact, it requires expert control to do so. And where or how that can be found surprises both of them.

Toward the end of the novel, Dylan gives Angele a fragment from a Dunstan Thompson poem:

*As for water, we have our own  
wells here.  
This ordered life is not  
for everyone,  
Never, to their surprise,  
for those who run  
Away from love.*

These lines bring together many of the themes of Carl’s novel: the symbolic importance of water as representative of what is essential to the soul, freedom found in order, and love that seeks each and every person on Earth.

*As Earth Without Water* traces Dylan and Angele’s love and friendship over the years. Carl takes readers to the roots of a greater love story playing out in their lives, in ways unknown to both of them. This story is appreciated most at its conclusion and invites readers to reread with new eyes. Having understood the undercurrent of love—the living water—beneath the individual lives of Dylan and Angele, readers will want to go back to the beginning to see the quiet, slow growth of this love all over again.

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## Papal Trial

Standing before his Long Island congregation in 1964, Rabbi Harold Saperstein addressed the controversy surrounding “The Deputy,” which had introduced Broadway theatergoers to a wartime pontiff more concerned for church assets than Jewish lives. Saperstein criticized Pope Pius XII for war crime denunciations deprived of “bite” by “diplomatic and theological verbiage.” Still, Saperstein insisted—“from personal experience” as a U.S. Army chaplain—that Pius XII himself be credited with church rescue of Roman Jews during the Nazis’ October 1943 round-up, recounting:

I drove into the Ghetto of Rome. People seeing the Star of David on my Jeep crowded around me. “How did you survive?” I asked. “The Pope gave orders to the churches and the monasteries to take us in,” they said, “and they did and saved our lives.”

This account by Saperstein—a learned but worldly man who had been wounded by an Arab sniper in Palestine in 1939 and worked with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee in Alabama in 1965—was consistent with the reporting from liberated Rome by the New York Times Pulitzer-winning columnist Anne O’Hare McCormick.

Now imagine you are Pius XII in October 1943, just after Germany’s SS had first moved against the Jews in Rome. Hundreds of Jews have already found shelter in Rome’s Catholic institutions, including the Vatican itself. (Within eight months, the num-

ber would swell well beyond 4,000, a third of Rome’s Jews.) You are weighing whether to chance the provocation that would come from publicly denouncing the arrests of the 1,000 Jews captured and destined to die. Wouldn’t the risk to the Jews whom you had welcomed into the church’s safekeeping weigh heavily in your decision? Not by David I. Kertzer’s reckoning in *The Pope at War: The Secret History of Pius XII, Mussolini, and Hitler*.

Kertzer dwells reproachfully on the Vatican’s muted reaction to the roundup but does not acknowledge the on-the-ground dilemma presented by the Jews already hidden. Only after alighting on a random range of topics unrelated to Jewish persecution—like the rosary-clutching of Mussolini’s mistress—does Kertzer concede a chapter later merely that Pius was “aware that among the large number of refugees concealed in Rome’s religious buildings were many Jews.”

Once you consider those Jews who had entrusted their lives to the church amid Nazi terror, you land in the world of hard choices, where we might learn from history and test our moral imagination and judgment. Kertzer, however, opts for a prosecutorial perch. Unfortunately, overzealousness and tunnel vision warp his prosecution, which relies partially on selective, sensationalized use of newly opened Vatican archives.

One example of Kertzer’s tunnel vision is his treatment of Vatican Radio. In late 1940, he writes, “Many Poles wondered why Vatican Radio, while occasionally speaking of Soviet misdeeds in Poland, had remained silent about the German occupation of

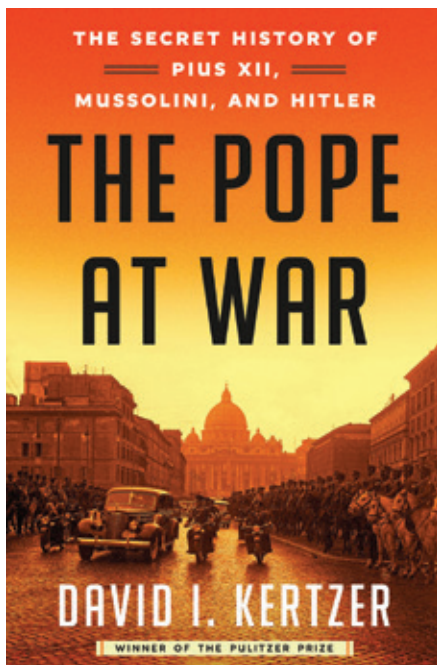
the country....” This misleads the reader egregiously.

In January 1940, Vatican Radio targeted Germany explicitly. Ranking Nazi behavior in Poland as worse than Russian behavior, a report broadcast in various languages decried how “Jews and Poles are being herded into separate ‘ghettos,’ hermetically sealed and pitifully inadequate for the economic subsistence of the millions destined to live there.” A 1941 book prefaced by Cardinal Arthur Hinsley, the archbishop of Westminster, contained a transcript of the broadcast, which also made the New York Times front page on Jan. 23, 1940. Part of the headline reads: “Germans Called Even Worse Than Russians.”

Kertzer also makes no mention of Vatican Radio’s repeated 1942 broadcasts of, and commentaries on the letter of the Archbishop of Toulouse, Cardinal Jules-Géraud Saliège, protesting the deportation of Jews in France.

More troubling is the omission of the specific details of a speech by Pius broadcast by Vatican Radio and reprinted in *L’Osservatore Romano* (another Vatican organ Kertzer deprives of its due). Kertzer recounts Pius XII’s address to the College of Cardinals in June 1943 thus: “The pope expressed his desire to respond to those who had asked for words of comfort, ‘troubled as they are,’ as the pope put it, ‘by reason of their nationality and their descent.’”

In *Under His Very Windows*, even Susan Zuccotti, a decided critic of Pius XII whom Kertzer cites repeatedly, quotes the pope in full. The pontiff voices compassion for those “tormented as they are for reasons of their nationality or descent” and “destined sometimes, even without guilt on their part, to exterminatory



### The Pope at War

The Secret History of Pius XII, Mussolini, and Hitler

By David I. Kertzer

Random House

672p \$37.50

Geographical stakes should never take precedence over innocent human lives. Kertzer, however, picks and chooses from among the evidence. Specifically, to suggest that public relations drove papal policy regarding Slovakia's Jews, he notes a Vatican memorandum that states concern about the appearance of scandal in Slovakia because a Catholic priest (as Kertzer made sure to note earlier on) headed Slovakia's government. Kertzer fails to note in what he has described as his archival "treasure hunting" that the Vatican regarded the priest as a "mad" renegade. Kertzer also skips over the opening sentence of a Vatican memorandum on Slovakia one week earlier: "The Jewish question is a question of humanity. The persecutions to which the Jews in Germany and the occupied or conquered countries are subjected are an offense against justice, charity, and humanity."

Kertzer also overstates his supposed discovery of archival evidence of Pius XII's clandestine wartime attempts to negotiate better wartime treatment of the battered German church through a German prince serving as an intermediary. The diaries of Italian Foreign Minister Galeazzo Ciano, published in 1946—along with German archives published in English in the 1950s and Vatican archives released in 1965—all refer to the prince.

If Kertzer's point is to show the Vatican capacity for intrigue, Pius's lengthy collaboration with the German resistance, amply documented

in Mark Riebling's *Church of Spies*, would have done the trick.

Of course, history like this conflicts with the notion of Pius XII as a timorous sheep in shepherd's clothing. So Kertzer sidesteps it. He does not explain how papal support for the resistance, conducted through use of diplomatic channels, would have continued had the Vatican decided to drop its pretense of neutrality. Nor does he address the purely logistical obstacles to Pius XII setting Catholic consciences afire with an explicit denunciation of Hitler. Kertzer clearly thinks Pius XII should have attempted such a protest, notwithstanding assured recrimination against the church and anyone it aided by diplomatic intervention or safe haven.

Ironically, Kertzer's own father, Morris Kertzer, published accounts 70 years ago that serve as counterpoints to much of his son's argument. Like Rabbi Saperstein, Morris Kertzer served as a World War II chaplain, earning a Bronze Star. *The Pope at War* is dedicated to him. Rabbi Kertzer served in the newly liberated Rome and wrote about it both then and in a 1947 book. A Midwestern newspaper in June 1944 quoted a letter from Kertzer: "The role of the pope and the many monasteries who hid the Jews from the [N]azis, and surreptitiously fed them, when detection could well mean seizure of the Vatican by the [N]azis, is to my mind a bright addition to the story of Christianity."

In his 1947 book, *With an H on My Dog Tag*, Rabbi Kertzer focused on Rome's Chief Rabbi Israel Zolli, who created controversy by becoming Catholic. Zolli's conversion brought charges from other Jews in the postwar era that Zolli had wrongly

measures." Kertzer's omission of the extermination reference is a terrible tell, a warning of facts being fashioned to fit a conclusion, not vice versa.

Kertzer's treatment of the Vatican's diplomatic intervention in Slovakia is equally misleading. Archbishop Angelo Roncalli, the Vatican nuncio to Turkey and later Pope John XXIII, sought to win Vatican support for transport to Palestine for Jewish children in Slovakia threatened with deportation by the Nazis. Initially, a blatantly antisemitic staffer reviewed the request and objected based on Zionism's threat to Catholic claims on the Holy Land. That objection registered as the matter underwent consideration higher up; Pius XII sent a telegram at one point to Roncalli that ignored the Palestine idea and instead instructed him to seek only a stop to deportations. By Kertzer's telling, Roncalli ultimately received instruction to "not give too much support to the emigration of the Jews to Palestine."

“refused to accept martyrdom when the Germans entered Rome.” Rabbi Kertzer issued a caution: “A critic in a comfortable apartment in New York or Chicago who condemns a man for refusing to be martyred should canvass his own conscience.”

In that vein, we should beware the temptation of moral condescension engendered by storytelling in which the ethical dilemmas faced by historical actors are minimized or stripped out altogether.

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## The Work-Life Imbalance

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Lara Bazelon’s latest book, *Ambitious Like a Mother* (published in April), is indeed an ambitious book, but one that does not quite meet expectations. It is cogent and interesting; but it is not the book I expected.

The subtitle, presumably addressing mothers, reads: “Why prioritizing your career is good for your kids.” I expected Bazelon to offer an argument about, well, why prioritizing my career would be good for my kids. Instead, the book turned out to be essentially a personal memoir disguised by its title as a universalist polemic.

Bazelon is a public defender turned law school professor who is, in her own words, “in love...with my job.” *Ambitious Like a Mother* includes details about the totalizing passion with

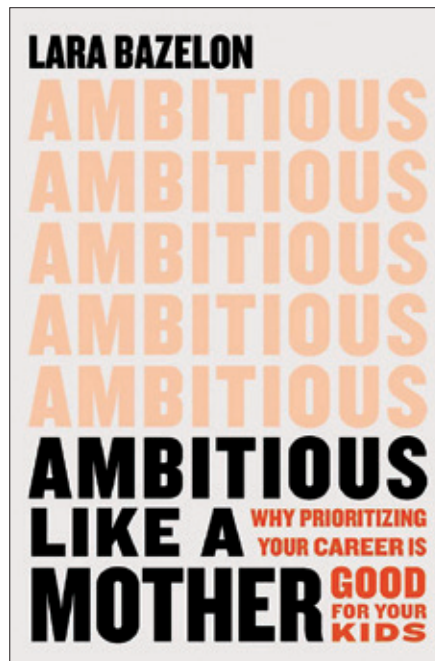
which she approaches her career, often an approach she is painfully aware would be popularly considered to be at the expense of her two children. Some of the most noteworthy tidbits include: Bazelon’s insistence on a trial date in a criminal case that she thought would have the greatest chance of freeing her client, even though it was on her daughter’s birthday; the fact that she commuted several hundred miles between cities when her children were young, missing several evenings a week with them; and the admission that her devotion to her career led, definitively if indirectly, to divorce, as her professional priorities ultimately could not be reconciled with the familial ones of her children’s father.

Like most parents, I identify with Bazelon’s insistence that perfect work-life balance does not exist. I also share her confidence that it is important for children to know that the world does not revolve around them—that is, to understand that adult life is full of competing priorities and constant optimization.

Beyond these broad premises, *Ambitious Like a Mother* offers little that is generalizable to its audience: those mothers who are sufficiently privileged to have “careers” rather than “jobs” (let alone any real acknowledgment of the majority of mothers, who are not so fortunate).

Still, the book does, perhaps unintentionally, raise some interesting questions about gender, work, family and ambition—and how individual women (and men) who are blessed with options might want that four-way intersection to look.

When Bazelon says that “prioritizing your career is good for your kids,” she is referring to her own anecdotal relationship to each loaded word



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### Ambitious Like a Mother

Why Prioritizing Your Career Is Good for Your Kids

By Lara Bazelon  
Little, Brown Spark  
272p \$29

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in this phrase—prioritize, career, good and kids—and those of hand-picked others that support her highly specific celebration of female professional ambition. Addressing each of these evocative words in turn might help us to see the oversights in Bazelon’s book and to think beyond them.

What does it mean to “prioritize” a career? Bazelon pushes against the well-worn ideal of the perfectly coiffed woman staying home to bake organic cupcakes for every birthday. Bazelon contends that such a creature of popular myth is not to be regarded with self-abnegation or wistfulness if you, like Bazelon, prefer to put professional matters ahead of culinary ones.

Fair enough. I have literally never baked birthday cupcakes for any of

my three children. Maybe it is because I've been "prioritizing" my career; I am a working mom and always have been. Or maybe it is because, regardless of whether I had a traditional "career" or not, I would have been prioritizing a dozen other things, from domestic to-do list items to catching up with friends to cooking something that I would rather spend that time on. Making it clear to children that they are not the center of the universe does not require the prioritization of a career per se. It just requires the prioritization of something that one deems more important than living up to the image of some ideal, mythical mother.

Bazon's father is an attorney who she says often put his job ahead of his family, and she has followed in his footsteps, becoming a public defender. When Bazon goes to trial, the lives and freedom of her clients hang in the balance. Whether or not one shares Bazon's extreme progressivism around criminal justice, we can all acknowledge that this is not just a career, but a calling.

To the extent that Bazon makes an argument in the book, it is that putting this calling (that of a public defender) ahead of the calling of motherhood (at times) is reasonable and even laudable. I expect that many emergency room physicians, Marines and others with similarly high-stakes professions could relate. But this does not apply—at all—to people with any agency in when and how they work (which, again, is not most people). "I intentionally missed my daughter's birthday because it was more important that this innocent man go free" is the stuff of sacrifice, not of "career." Replace it with "I intentionally missed my daughter's birthday so I could

make an extra sale" and it loses not just some of its luster, but all of it.

What about the "kids," and what is "good" for them? Bazon has two children. If she had four, as her own mother did, the book's examples of prioritization, quality time and busyness would be rendered irrelevant by the amount of work required to care for a larger family. Being the healthily optimal "good enough" mother to four simply requires at least as much time as being the unhealthily pathological "devouring mother" to one.

Like my own mother, who left a high-powered job to stay home when I was nearly 4, I have three kids. Also like my mother, I do not need to fly to a different city every week to drive home for my children the point that others often have needs that supersede their own. Just as I did, my kids have a reasonably steady parade of siblings' tantrums and skinned knees—not to mention issues involving their parents' conventional jobs and extended families, as well as their school, community and other aspects of a full life—to make their own lack of centrality in the wider universe plenty plain.

And this is despite the fact that my choices around family and career (and, for that matter, my husband's) cut against Bazon's advice.

When my oldest son was born, my husband left his job at a large law firm for a job at a small one with better hours. He took a big pay cut and accepted the new uncertainty of his professional trajectory. Meanwhile, I have always chosen jobs that give me utmost flexibility to be with our sons. My husband and I are highly educated and professionally ambitious; yet clearly, our revealed preference is to be (what we consider) optimally pres-

ent to love, discipline and teach our boys in their formative years.

It would be easy—but in equal measure arrogant and self-referential, since we cannot know the counterfactual—for me to say that these decisions have been good for my kids. After all, like Bazon, I can theorize—but I cannot actually know—whether my choices to live somewhere in that vast gray area between organic cupcakes and regular nights away will have any impact on the men that my sons become. Like Bazon, all I really know—and, crucially, all I need to know to own my decisions without presuming that they constitute a thesis—is how I feel called to behave (and how I am grateful to be able to behave) as a mother.

This is why I wish that Bazon had just written a pure memoir: She would have penned a far more relatable book if she had striven less for relatability. Owning the idiosyncrasy of her own career, as well as of the personal choices that have surrounded it, would have made her story a thought-provoking biography, rather than an unfulfilled attempt to give parenting and professional advice.

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# Most Precious Blood

*Is it time to start receiving from the cup again?*

By Terence Sweeney

On Sunday, May 22, I received the precious blood at a small Dominican priory. When the time came for Communion, I stepped forward and received the host on my tongue, then the priest placed the chalice in my hands. I lifted the chalice to my lips and, for the first time in two years and two months, I took and drank.

As I knelt afterward, slightly taken aback by this moment of grace, I found myself thinking of why we call this blood “precious.” In Latin it is actually “most precious”—*pretiosissimus*. To say that it is the *most* precious is to say that it is of the highest value, the greatest worth and the most honor. But after two years without it, I fear we are forgetting what is so precious about Christ’s blood and the reception of Communion in both forms.

When I was a child, my mother taught me not to receive from the chalice. Jesus was fully present in both the consecrated host and the consecrated wine, so you did not really need to receive both. My mother was, in a real way, right. To receive the body is to receive Christ fully; to receive the blood is to receive Christ fully. *And yet*, to receive

only one is to miss something important.

Since the beginning of Covid-19, we have been missing that something. Withholding the chalice was a worthwhile precaution (even if there is little reason to believe drinking from the common cup brings a high risk of contracting Covid-19). But as restrictions on daily life during the pandemic continue to be dropped, the time has come to reconsider this sacramental restriction and recommit to the preciousness of receiving from the chalice of salvation.

The preciousness of reception in both kinds is grounded in Jesus’ Last Supper. In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus says to his apostles: “Take and eat; this is my body.” But he does not stop there. “Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you’” (Mt 26:27). For Jesus, the presence of both body and blood was crucial to the liturgy he celebrated and initiated. In celebrating the Last Supper, Jesus acted with intention, prioritizing what is essential to the liturgy: bread, wine, eating, and drinking. In commemorating the liturgy he initiated, we carry forward Christ’s intention in our reception.

While reception from the cup became uncommon for the laity in the Roman Rite, it was rightly restored after the Second Vatican Council. The restoration is a testimony to the proper recognition of the dignity of the laity. We too—thanks to the grace of God, the power of baptism and the contrition of our hearts—are welcome to receive, even if none of us are worthy that he should “enter under my roof.”

Reception under both kinds is a deeper understanding of the eucharistic sign. This is not to say that a sacrament is *merely* a symbol. I am with Flannery O’Connor: “If it’s just a symbol, to hell with it.” But believing that it is not only a symbol does not mean that the symbolic is unimportant. The symbolism matters if we are to understand and live out the substance of the Eucharist.

In one important sense, the symbolism of food and drink is clear. We need the sustaining spiritual nourishment offered by bread and wine. St. Augustine, knowing that Jesus “has redeemed me with his blood,” thought about his own role as a priest in relation to the sacrament. “I am mindful of my ransom. I eat it, I drink it. I dispense it to others, and as a pauper I long to be filled with it among those who are fed and feasted.” As empty, we long for the spiritual food that fills us. As thirsty, we pray for the sacramental saturation of the deserts of our hearts. And in the experience of both, we live in solidarity with all those who lack food and drink and are called to share our food and drink with them.

But why wine? Wouldn’t water be a better option to express our neediness? Rehydrating with water is certainly wiser than with alcohol. True, during many historical periods, wine was safer to drink than water—which could not always be trusted. But is that really the reason people drank it? If so, Jesus could have just purified the water at the wedding feast of Cana. Instead, he made 180 gallons of wine—enough to fill about 1,000 bottles. Seems a bit excessive for hydration purposes.

If wine is not about quenching parched throats, what is it for? Psalm 104 offers us the real reason: “Wine makes glad the hearts of men.” Bread sustains us, but wine is the stuff of celebrations, not just of weddings at Cana but of the ultimate wedding banquet in heaven.

The symbolic importance of the wine is the rejuvenating joy of communion in Christ. Wine is excessive, just as God’s love for us is. As wine fills us with joy, so too does the precious blood, which washes us of our sins and fills us with joy. The reception of this joy is a summons to “be people who wish to share their joy,” as Pope Francis teaches in “The Gospel of Joy.” To receive the blood is to experience

the joy of our reception into the body of Christ. We should invite others into this joy.

These days are not exactly filled with joy in the world or the church. Exhausted by partisanship, anguished by gun violence and abortion, and anxious about rising costs and declining opportunities, we would like to look to the church for solace. But within the church, too, we often find scandal and embittered political partisanship. In a time of scandal and anger, of anxiety and grief, we need the joy of reception again. We need to remember what is most precious.

People have continued, legitimate concerns about Covid-19 and will make decisions about their own health. Nevertheless, as we open society, we should not leave the chalice off limits. At many parishes, after Mass you can now grab a donut from a tray, pick up a Styrofoam cup of coffee and chat with fellow parishioners. But you cannot receive the precious blood.

Certainly, no one should be pressured into reception from the chalice. That being said, we need to be reminded of the value of the Eucharist, and that is best done in the practice of reception. There may be ways to offset the concern of a common cup through practices like intinction, good cleaning protocols and well-trained eucharistic ministers. In doing so, the goal should be to offer both the bread of life and the chalice of salvation as Jesus did in the upper room.

The bishops are calling for a eucharistic renewal, and Pope Francis is calling for a renewed commitment to the contemporary celebration of Mass. We need both desperately. But if we are committed to both, then we should be committed to reception of Communion in both forms. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* teach, “the sign of communion is more complete when given under both kinds, since in that form the sign of the Eucharistic meal appears more clearly.”

Eucharistic renewal, societal renewal and ecclesial renewal require remembering what is important to us. This entails reordering our loves to put what is most precious first: communion with God and one another.

After I received from the chalice in that small Dominican chapel, I thought about these loves and the communion found in Communion, the sustenance found in the shared bread, the joy found in wine, the completion found in both. And the salvation found in the most precious blood.

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Terence Sweeney is an adjunct professor of philosophy at Villanova University and scholar in residence at the Collegium Institute at the University of Pennsylvania.

## The Power of Parables

The three Synoptic Gospels—Mark, Matthew and Luke—incorporate parables as an element of Jesus’ teaching ministry. Jesus uses these short stories as vehicles for revealing details about the kingdom of God and instilling lessons to strengthen relationships with God and one another. During the month of September, we encounter multiple parables from the Gospel of Luke.

Parables are short, relatable stories with messages that can speak to diverse audiences. They are often rooted in everyday life, such as work experiences, family dynamics and home life. On the 24th Sunday in Ordinary Time, we hear multiple well-

known parables about lost objects being found. The parables of the lost sheep, coin and son highlight God’s interest and care for all people, even when they may go astray. In particular, the parable of the prodigal son emphasizes acknowledgement of misdeeds, repentance and forgiveness.

On the 25th Sunday the parable of the dishonest worker includes some difficult and unclear content, although ultimately dishonest actions are critiqued. On the 26th Sunday the Gospel describes a nameless rich man and the poor man Lazarus, whose roles are reversed in the afterlife. The story is a reminder of human dignity and care for those most in need. The story also

reiterates the importance of learning from past prophets.

The abundance of parables speaks to how compelling storytelling can be. People remember and connect easily with short stories, and they can adapt elements to fit various contexts. For a modern example, perhaps the lost coin is more comparable to a lost credit card or lost electronic device. The dishonest house steward might be more like someone who commits tax fraud. As we pray with Luke’s parables, we can be inspired by the art of storytelling and develop contemporary parallels that can teach similar principles for modern readers.

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Jaime L. Waters teaches at the Boston College School of Theology and Ministry. She is an associate professor of Old Testament.

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1909 SOCIETY

# America

# The Language of Hope

*How Catholic universities can help bridge our divides*

By Tania Christina Tetlow



I took an unusual path to serving as a Catholic lay leader, a path that may have helped me understand the importance of Catholic leadership at this difficult moment in our history. As a youthful act of rebellion, I did not go to a Catholic university. After all, I had already received a Jesuit education from birth. My mother is a Jesuit-educated theologian and my father had been a Jesuit priest for 17 years before he left to have a family. Maybe I needed to see the world differently.

I went to a secular university near home, then off to law school at Harvard (or, as my mentor, Congresswoman Lindy Boggs, called it, “that Yankee Protestant school”). There I found myself slightly embarrassed to wear a crucifix but because of that, I made myself do it. I worried that religion was seen as ignorant, but to me, religion was intellectual. The walls of my house had been lined with books of biblical scholarship, and when my parents did not want to be overheard by the children, they spoke in ancient Greek. The idea of being lumped in with those whose religion rejects reason felt unfair to me.

I also discovered the stereotype that religious people are politically conservative, something that made me dig deeper into the ways our church actually straddles the American political divide. From the church’s teachings on abortion to the death penalty, concern for the poor and care for the

earth—none of it neatly corresponds to our current political chasms. Not only that, but the very roots of our teachings have begun to seem countercultural. As Catholics, we believe in making sacrifices for a common good. We believe in caring for our neighbors as brothers and sisters and in welcoming the stranger. It may seem that libertarianism has begun to triumph, but the church’s teachings stand firmly against it.

There have always been two competing instincts in American political values. Individualism drives the search for opportunity and human freedom. Just as powerfully, communitarianism defines a common good and teaches us civic virtue. A healthy balance between the two has served us well. Right now, however, unchecked individualism is trouncing our communitarian norms, poisoning our political discourse with unfettered selfishness. Even in the midst of a pandemic, when our very breath can infect others, we struggle to acknowledge that our freedoms almost always affect others. More and more of us refuse to see our neighbors as one human family, deserving of respect and dignity. We are losing the common values we need to push back against growing movements of hatred and political violence.

So what does it mean to be a Catholic lay leader when everything seems to be falling apart? I believe it

is an enormous opportunity. If we can call American Catholics back to the church’s teachings, if we can speak a language of common values that reminds all Americans of our founding principles, we might provide a spark of hope.

As a leader of a Catholic university, I also try (admittedly, sometimes with trepidation) to make our institution a center of nuanced discussion of critical issues. In the Catholic intellectual tradition, I hope our institutions will demonstrate the power of intellectual curiosity and humility. I believe we can build bridges over the growing divides.

None of this will be easy. The forces pulling our country apart also divide American Catholics. In a time of absolutes, the language of nuance and humility falls flat. But as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. reminded us, progress is not inevitable. We have to fight for it, every day.

We speak in the language of hope because we must. We follow the lessons of the Gospels because we believe. And we pray hard that we can make a difference.

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*Tania Christina Tetlow became the president of Fordham University in New York in July. From 2018 until this year, she was president of Loyola University New Orleans. She is the first woman and the first layperson to hold those positions at those Catholic universities.*



# CONVERSATIONS ON SUSTAINABILITY

## THE PHILOSOPHY OF ORGANISM AND THE METAPHYSICAL FOUNDATIONS OF ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

Dr. Brian G. Henning is Professor of Philosophy and of Environmental Studies at Gonzaga University in Spokane, WA where he serves as Director of the Gonzaga Center for Climate, Society, and the Environment.

The ecological crisis requires more than reducing pollution and developing clean energy: it demands that we change our minds. Dr. Henning proposes a renovated approach to cultivating sustainability-- one that requires a fundamental transformation of how we see ourselves as a species, our relationship to our planet, and how we think and act. In order to practice an adequate environmental ethics, we must first develop an adequate environmental metaphysics. Please join the dialog and all are welcome.

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