

# America

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THE JESUIT REVIEW OF FAITH AND CULTURE

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# America, My Country

1 A - mer - i - ca, my coun - try, the home of lib - er - ty;  
2 A - mer - i - ca, my coun - try, through - out the march of years,  
3 I know a - no - ther coun - try, I see through eyes of faith;  
4 A - mer - i - ca, my coun - try, let heav - ven be your guide!

the hope of dream - ing mass - es, still year - ning to breathe free:  
you've lift - ed up the low - ly through to - il, blood and tears.  
be - yond my earth - ly home - land; be - yond all time and space;  
In ev' - ry soul with - in you, faith, hope and love a - bide!

I call up - on your great - ness, your daugh - ters and your sons,  
And still your prom - ise bec - kons; your dream is un - ful - filled,  
where love no more has bor - ders; a home for rich and poor;  
A - mer - i - ca, my coun - try! I know your des - ti - ny:

of ev' - ry race and na - tion, though out of ma - ny, one.  
while fear and want in - hab - it the ci - ty on a hill.  
where hearts no more are rest - less; where hands no more wage war.  
to lift the hea - vy bur - dens and set the cap - tive free!

Text: Matt Malone, S.J. (b. 1972)

Tune: "Aurelia" by Samuel S. Wesley (1810-1876)

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## A Hymn for a New Year

A few months ago, I attended a conference in Chicago sponsored by the Catholic Common Ground Initiative. During two days of presentations and conversations we explored the causes of polarization in the church and in the country and discussed various strategies for addressing both. Polarization is a serious problem and a complex one, involving a long list of causes and myriad effects. But you already know that, for we see the effects of polarization every day on the cable news channels, in newspapers, in our social media feeds. The cumulative effect can be enervating if not downright dispiriting.

At Mass on the second day of the conference, the Communion hymn was a song set to “Aurelia,” a tune composed by Samuel Sebastian Wesley in 1864, familiar to most Christians as the setting for “The Church’s One Foundation.” As I sat listening to the hymn, I thought back to the years I spent living in England during my theology studies and of the beautiful music I often heard sung at public events, songs like “Jerusalem,” “I Vow to Thee My Country” and “Guide Me, O Thou Great Redeemer.” Rich in theological content, these songs are known to nearly every Briton and are sung at all manner of gatherings both sacred and profane.

As I sat there in Chicago, I thought about how music can serve as a bridge across divisions, uniting hearts and voices in a way that mere speech cannot. Throughout that day I put pen to paper, and by the time I arrived home in New York, “America, My Country” was largely completed. (See opposite page.)

I sought to write a hymn rather

than a patriotic song. I like patriotic songs, and we have several good ones in our national repertoire; but I wanted to situate America in a specifically religious context, and I was intrigued by the idea of what a prophet like Isaiah might say to the contemporary United States. By using this imagery of the Old Testament, along with a tune familiar to most Christians, I sought to write a hymn that would be accessible to people from multiple faith traditions.

Yet I also wanted the hymn to evoke the memory of all Americans, not only people of faith. So I reached back into our shared history, searching for phrases and imagery that might prompt our national memory. No political party has a monopoly on such things. The biblical phrase “a city on a hill,” for example, was a favorite of President Reagan’s, and the words of Isaiah cited in the last verse were invoked by President Kennedy in his inaugural address.

The polarized world we live in, of course, means that some will inevitably see in this modest work a veiled critique, or even, perhaps, a direct critique of contemporary politics or specific politicians. That is not my intention. True, the lyrics present a challenge, but that is what prophets like Isaiah do. The idea of America as unfinished, as always aspiring to something more, is the motive force of the American dream. That and the other values that the hymn evokes are the values I was taught in my youth, which were then thought to be held dear by all Americans. I believe they still are. But now, unfortunately, expressions of these shared values, like everything else, are subjected to the

inquisitorial scrutiny of political partisans of every stripe—one of the more odious consequences of polarization.

In the end, of course, it’s just a song. You might like it, you might not. I offer it here as a gift to you, our readers, to my church and my country. We face momentous decisions in the year ahead, as this issue’s editorial indicates. These decisions will no doubt be painful, and there will be no shortage of debate about the best way forward. But if we are to know where to go, we must remember where we come from and, more important, who we are. The values that have guided this country through more than 200 years should not be and cannot be up for debate. “We are bound together by the most powerful of all ties,” President Gerald Ford once said, “our fervent love for freedom and independence, which knows no homeland but the human heart.”

Like you, my friends, my heart is weary of polarization, of partisanship, of the cynical motive-questioning that characterizes too much of our public discourse. But in the end, I still believe that “there is nothing wrong with America that can’t be cured by what is right with America.” I still believe in that “city upon a hill.” I still believe that “the arc of the moral universe bends toward justice”; that “we have nothing to fear but fear itself”; that “the better angels of our nature” will prevail; that it is still worth asking what I can do for America, my country.

Happy New Year!

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



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### THE MONKS AND THE MANUSCRIPTS

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Columba Stewart



CNS photo/Evandro Inetti, pool

Pope Francis and prelates from around the world attend a penitential liturgy during a meeting on the protection of minors in the church at the Vatican, Feb. 23, 2019. On Dec. 17 the pope abolished the obligation of secrecy for abuse victims during Vatican trials and processes.

Cover: A damaged manuscript located in Qaraqosh, Iraq.

Photo: the Hill Museum and Manuscript Library

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## The Gentleman From Ohio

John Boehner was the subject of the 2019 America Profile (“A Conversation With Former House Speaker John Boehner,” 12/9/19). The cover story generated a fair amount of feedback, much of it expressing a longing for bipartisanship in the public square. Here are a few examples.

### Bipartisan Cooperation

Thank you for the **America** profile of former House Speaker John Boehner. The speaker’s statement that between him and then-Vice President Joe Biden, “there was nothing we couldn’t resolve,” reflects the bipartisan cooperation our nation so badly needs today. In recognizing these two prominent Catholic leaders in 2016 to share the University of Notre Dame’s highest honor, the then-board chair Richard Notebaert said the Laetare Medal was conferred on both men “neither to advance your favored causes nor to endorse your respective policies, but to celebrate two lives and careers inspired by the Catholic call to service and admirably dedicated to the alignment of our democratic institutions with the contours of the common weal.”

Predictably, in 2016 partisans on both sides complained loudly about the selection of the individual in the opposing party. **America**’s insightful profile of “The Gentleman From Ohio” gives us a chance to reflect on what true public service calls for today.

(Rev.) John I. Jenkins, C.S.C.

President, University of Notre Dame

### Maybe a ‘Shock’ We Need

Thank you for your very insightful and caring article about John Boehner. Humility, friendliness, character and faith were the threads that wove together the sketch of this fine man.

He departed Congress, as you reported, at the advent of where we are in today’s Washington’s mess. As John Boehner did, maybe some of our congressional leaders should take a walk and have a serious conversation with the Almighty.

Maybe John Boehner’s prophecy is that we need a shock to come to our senses. Hopefully, we have the time to recover and focus on real needs. This interview should be read by everyone clamoring for political upmanship in our Capitol today.

Brian Flanagan

St. James, N.C.

### Son of a Saloonkeeper

Well done. I watched Pope Francis’ address to Congress live—my eyes also “sweated” a lot then, as they are doing now as I type. As Father Malone wrote: “In what other country could the son of a saloonkeeper, one of 12 children in a two-bedroom house, rise to become the speaker of the national assembly?” That is John Boehner’s story.

Joseph G. Milklovic

St. Louis, Mo.

### True Public Servant

An illuminating and thought-provoking interview with a true public servant. It provides both an alarm and a signal of hope on the current state of our national discourse. As Speaker Boehner commented, Congress was meant to be the place for advancing big ideas, reaching for the sky and trying to help our country excel. Women and men of both parties worked out their differing views believing in the good intent of the other. To return to that time (not so long ago) will call upon every bit of that American resilience he praises.

Robert Lively

### Our Problematic Press

I believe Mr. Boehner is right that the press, both the hard left and hard right, greatly contribute to the current sad state of partisanship and division. Compromise is now viewed as a four-letter word. To paraphrase the words from the hymn “Let there be peace on earth, let it begin with me,” let there be less rancor and more empathy, and let it begin with me.

Lloyd William

### Stop Lobbying for Tobacco

It’s wonderful that Boehner reflects on spiritual realities and has frequent “conversations” with the Lord. But let’s pray that the Lord leads him to stop lobbying for tobacco companies and leads him to lobby against them. I cannot fathom a person in good conscience doing such a thing.

Rhett Segall

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

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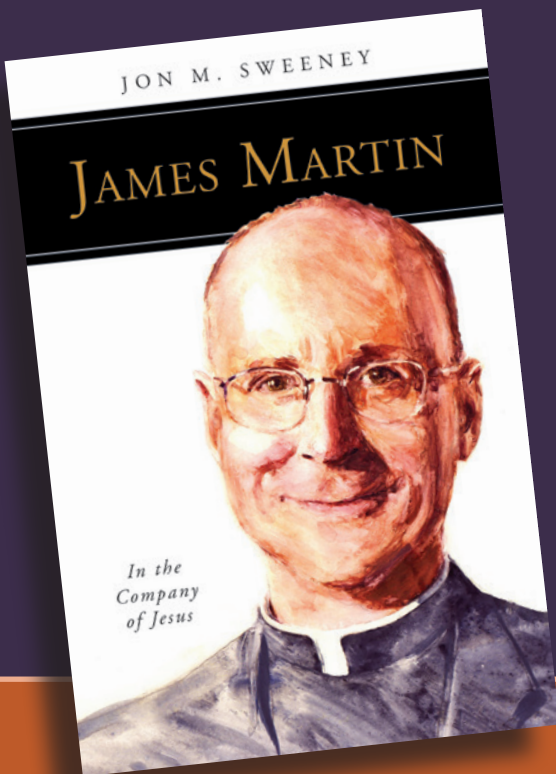
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## The Question of Impeachment

*This editorial was originally published online on Dec. 16, 2019, two days before the House of Representatives voted to impeach President Donald J. Trump.*

For only the third time in the history of the republic, the U.S. House of Representatives will vote this week on articles of impeachment against a president of the United States. Every responsible citizen will see this event for the tragedy it is—a grievous wound to the body politic of a nation already torn asunder by the forces of polarization. Our civic duty requires us to rise above partisan and sectional interests and to act to preserve the constitutional order.

The articles of impeachment that the House will consider state that President Trump “ignored and injured the interests of the nation.” The first article charges the president with using “the powers of his high office” to solicit “the interference of a foreign government, Ukraine, in the 2020 United States presidential election.”

The second article of impeachment states that the president obstructed the legitimate, constitutional actions of the House of Representatives by directing “the unprecedented, categorical and indiscriminate defiance of subpoenas issued by the House of Representatives” during the course of its investigation into the allegations contained in the first article.

The U.S. Constitution states that the president “shall be removed from office on impeachment for, and conviction of, treason, bribery or other high crimes and misdemeanors.” Since the Constitution does not define all of those terms, people of good will can and do disagree about whether the president’s actions with respect to Ukraine and the subsequent congressional investigation constitute impeachable offenses.

Yet it is clear from the evidence produced thus far that the president’s conduct belongs to a sphere of activity that was a matter of great concern to the framers of the Constitution and, at a minimum, represents a grave constitutional hazard. “The desire [of] foreign powers to gain an improper ascendant in our counsels,” Alexander Hamilton wrote in the *Federalist Papers*, is “one of the most deadly adversaries of republican government.”

The evidence indicates that the now-famous phone call between President Trump and President Volodymyr Zelenskyy of Ukraine on July 25, 2019, not to mention its associated activities, cannot be characterized in any objective sense as “perfect,” as the president has described it, nor can it be described as historically typical. There are few, if any, historical examples of a U.S. president asking a foreign head of state to launch a criminal probe into the associates of a domestic po-

litical rival.

It is also highly unusual for a president to refuse to cooperate entirely with the legitimate and lawful actions of Congress in the exercise of its constitutional prerogatives, however odious or partisan in intent the president may judge their decisions to be.

In evaluating the evidence, it is important to bear in mind the framework for impeachment and trial established by the Constitution. In 1974, the editors of this review, in an editorial that assessed the case against then-President Richard M. Nixon, described this framework:

The function of the House is to accuse or not to accuse. The function of the Senate is to acquit or convict. Clearly, the two functions are not the same and should not be governed by the same rules. The members of the House do not have to ask themselves whether there is sufficient evidence to convict. What they do have to ask themselves is whether there is sufficient evidence to justify, or even require, accusation.

The function of the accusation is to compel the President to defend himself. The question, then, before the House is whether the evidence presently available with respect to [the President] demands further explanation and defense of his activities.

In applying that standard to the present case, it is clear that the evidence, including the meager evidence provided by President Trump himself, demands further explanation and defense, which can be fully realized only through the formal proceedings of a trial by the U.S. Senate. The president’s apparent conduct raises grave constitutional questions; and the evidence suggests a pattern of wrongdoing that, at a minimum, raises the question of whether the president abused the power of his office.

Common objections to this course of action include the following:

The first objection is that the impeachment process has been driven purely by partisan motivations, that Democratic members of Congress have wanted to impeach the president since the day he took office. In a nation beset by partisan conflict, there is an obvious element of truth in that claim.

That claim, however, is a fallacious argument that has no dispositive bearing on the facts. As a matter of logic, the fact that some Democrats have long suspected Mr. Trump of abusing the power of his office neither guarantees nor eliminates the possibility that he has done so. In the event of a trial, sena-



tors should stick to the facts and avoid accusing each other of bad motives, a tactic that characterized the proceedings in the House. The only ultimate question is whether the full set of facts reveals a pattern of behavior that warrants the conviction and removal of the president.

The second objection to impeachment relies on the conventional wisdom that in a time of polarization we cannot expect two-thirds of the U.S. Senate, including 20 Republican senators, to vote to convict the president—the supermajority required by the Constitution. For this reason, many have argued that we should abandon the impeachment process and allow the 2020 presidential election to settle the question of Mr. Trump’s incumbency.

Yet such a course would absolve senators of their constitutional duty to rise above their partisan interests and to act as fair and impartial jurors. If the U.S. Senate is unable to act as an impartial jury, moreover, then the most important constitutional checks on the power of the chief executive—namely, impeachment and removal—are meaningless.

As we stated at the outset, these events are testing the constitutional order, not only the future of the presidency of Donald J. Trump. Is the system of checks and balances established by our founders still viable? In the constitutional republic they envisioned, citizens should expect the U.S. Senate to consider the matter in an evenhanded manner, each senator arriving at an independent judgment after considering the national interest and after consulting his or her conscience. Citizens should expect that some Democratic senators, acting in good conscience, would consider acquittal, and that some Republican senators, similarly acting in good conscience, would consider conviction.

Indeed, prescinding from the actual outcome of the trial, if the U.S. Senate is able to produce a few examples of such profiles in courage, then it will have done much to restore the faith of the American people in the ability of their elected officials to act in conscience for a greater good. We should give the Senate the opportunity to do so.

Whatever the outcome, no party or politician will be able to claim absolute victory or vindication. The founders gave us the power to remove a president through impeachment and conviction, but they viewed this process as a last resort, as a course to be pursued when all else has failed to provide the check on executive power that the Constitution requires.

All else has failed. Yet the nation, through its representatives in the U.S. Senate, will soon have an opportunity to demonstrate to the world that the Constitution has not failed; that our founding charter is still the guiding light of our country; and that we the people still possess the courage to meet the high standards it sets for every citizen.

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## We can make modern economics compatible with morality

As a Jesuit priest and professor of finance, I am often asked: How can a member of the clergy be involved in such a field? My response is that I am following in the footsteps of noted clergymen going back centuries. Theoretical foundations and practical policy matters, both in economics and finance, are linked to moral theology and ethics. Too often, this link is forgotten.

The Jesuits at Salamanca in the late 16th century laid the foundations for modern financial markets by re-evaluating the longstanding prohibition of usury for Christians. These Jesuit thinkers understood that the lending of money was a means to share the risk of new business ventures, and that the payment of interest could be understood as a compensation for taking that risk. In earlier understanding, the lending of money was simply to help a brother or sister in need, so charging interest was considered an added burden on a fellow Christian.

Similarly, as market economies expanded, the natural law concept of money having to have intrinsic value, as gold or silver, came into question. The same Jesuit thinkers reasoned that a king could issue “debased” coinage, without intrinsic value, to facilitate the needs of commerce.

This led the famed astronomer and Polish priest Copernicus to delve into macroeconomics. He quickly saw the relation between the rate of growth of the new debased money and the rate of inflation. Controlling inflation implied controlling the expansion of the money supply.

And we often forget that Adam Smith—the author of *The Wealth of Nations*, the foundational book of modern economics, which touts en-

lightened self-interest as the driving force for prosperity—was also the author of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. When Smith, a Calvinist clergyman, talks of self-interest, there is a presumption of a well-defined moral framework based on the Ten Commandments, as well as values based on Scripture, including empathy and love of neighbor.

So there is a great tradition of moral thought in economics and finance. Yet too often decision-makers and theoreticians of economics and finance show little understanding of the links of their disciplines with moral reasoning. The economic devastation as a result of the global financial crisis of 2008 is one example of what can happen when the “invisible hand” becomes separated from any sense of morality. This was a truly needless crisis, since it had nothing to do with any fundamental change in real resources nor any natural scarcities in the global economy. It was simply the bursting of a speculative bubble fed by greed. The players in this game of speculation knew that if the markets collapsed, as they did, they had nothing to fear, since their institutions (being “too big to fail”) would be bailed out by entities like the Federal Reserve.

Since the 2008 crisis, there has been a great deal of research about the regulation of markets and financial institutions. Much of it, however, is based on the very narrow scope of economic efficiency. It is no secret that the professions of economics and finance are at a loss when it comes to discussions of moral hazard and the trade-offs of too little or too much regulation.

Perhaps there is a need for a 21st-century Salamanca school of moral theologians and ethicists to

delve into the issues of modern economics and finance in collaboration with frontline research in economics and finance. Is this a far-fetched idea? Medical researchers, as well as medical decision-makers, have to face the moral dimensions of their work. By law or by conscience, they routinely consult with researchers in bioethics across an array of subdisciplines, from stem cell research to end-of-life care. Why cannot similar developments happen in economics and finance?

In the past, in various countries, the Society of Jesus set up social research institutes. Many of these focused on the rights of labor unions. The labor schools, in particular, had a great deal of success in educating labor union leaders on issues of collective bargaining. Other institutes focused on broader issues of economic development. But the world of finance is at once more focused and more complex. Multidisciplinary research and dialogue among ethicists, moralists and financial economists is a daunting task but one for which there is a real and present need. The Salamanca Jesuits were clearly able to think outside the box of received teachings on natural law. The time has come for those in the world of finance and economics to think beyond their narrow boxes and collaborate with moral and ethical researchers.

---

Paul D. McNelis, S.J., is a professor of finance at the Gabelli School of Business at Fordham University, in New York City.



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# As protests continue in Hong Kong, Beijing's criticism of churches grows louder

By Verna Yu

“It is time Hong Kong’s churches rid themselves of poison,” said the narrator in a video released recently by the Chinese state media, as the city’s activist Christian community becomes the latest target of official opprobrium.

Hong Kong’s ongoing unrest, sparked in early June by a controversial extradition law that has since been withdrawn, shows no sign of abating. By mid-December police reported that they had arrested more than 6,000 people and fired more than 16,000 rounds of tear gas, 10,000 rubber bullets and even live rounds in efforts to suppress the demonstrations. Some demonstrators have thrown Molotov cocktails and bricks at security forces.

In recent weeks, the Chinese government has intensified its rhetoric against Christian churches in Hong Kong, portraying them as part of the “foreign hostile forces” that seek to create political unrest—and not just in Hong Kong. A video titled “Chaotic Hong Kong Religious Groups Abandon God’s Will,” posted on a People’s Daily’s microblog, begins with a broad accusation: “Churches that stir chaos in Hong Kong have become political organs.... Let’s strip them of their religious cloaks—those religious con artists who meddle in politics and poison young people!”

Christian churches and clergy have tried to play a mediating role since the start of the crisis, but their criticism of police brutality and violations of human rights has provoked the Chinese government’s wrath. Joseph Ha Chi-shing, an auxiliary bishop of the Diocese of Hong Kong, asked participants at a prayer meeting in late October to remain peaceful as they demonstrated for democracy. “Many people think because our opponents provoke us and don’t respond to us, we can harbor hatred and anger,” he said. But Hong Kong’s Christians, even in resistance, “are also responsible” to remain nonviolent, Bishop Ha said.

Kenneth Chan, a political scientist at Hong Kong’s Baptist University and a Catholic, said official Chinese rhetoric often attributes party failures to “external forces.” He said Beijing’s hostility toward churches reflects “a deep-rooted ideological prejudice against Christianity.”

“The party sees the universality and supranationality of Christianity as a threat to the ideological supremacy of the ruling elites,” he said. “They see all this in terms of political struggles over people’s spiritual yearnings.”

After the crackdown of the Tiananmen Square movement in 1989, the Chinese Communist Party concluded

A protester holds a flag that reads: “Liberate Hong Kong, Revolution of Our Times” at a rally in Hong Kong on Dec. 12.



AP Photo/Mark Schiefelbein

that Christianity and Christian churches played a part in the fall of Communist regimes in Eastern Europe. It now views the Christian faith as an agent of imperialism, he said.

Professor Ying Fuk Tsang, the director of the divinity school at the Chinese University of Hong Kong and one of the three Christian figures singled out in the official video, said the Chinese authorities have in recent years stepped up their rhetoric on religion as a destabilizing force in Chinese society.

“The Chinese government resorts to [blaming] external forces and they link Christian participation to the Western manipulation,” Mr. Ying said, citing as one example the Chinese authorities’ view that the U.S. Central Intelligence Agen-

cy is inciting unrest across the world. “So opening churches to the ‘rioters’ is to shield them. To sympathize with protesters is to condone violence.

“Even the joint statements made by students and alumni [from Christian schools] are criticized as meddling by the church,” Mr. Ying said.

Naming outspoken Christian clergy members and scholars, including Cardinal Joseph Zen, bishop emeritus of Hong Kong, as the key culprits, the narrator in the Communist Party video said Catholic and Protestant churches were guilty of “inciting” and abetting anti-government “riots.” The video cited prayer meetings, joint ecumenical statements that condemn police brutality and even hospitality toward protesters as “evidence” of the churches’ alleged plan to subvert Hong Kong.

Hong Kong churches have become the focus of much of Beijing’s anger at the refusal of Hong Kong’s young people to accept its rule. Many schools, colleges and civil or social service organizations are run by churches. Some 40 percent of the people arrested so far have been students. The Chinese government views Christianity as a heretical influence on Hong Kong society, even though the majority

of Christian churches have not been outspoken on the current crisis and political issues.

The singing of the hymn “Sing Hallelujah to the Lord” was a regular component of the first weeks of the anti-government demonstrations, often sung during tense stand-offs between protesters and police as Christian pastors and Catholic priests prayed with hundreds of protesters. After the police banned rallies and demonstrations, protesters resorted to calling their rallies Christian assemblies, which do not require police permission.

Reverend Youngman Chan, who has acted as a peacemaker between police and protesters during numerous confrontations, believes the current crisis presents unprecedented challenges for Christian churches. While many Hong Kong Christians believe they have a legitimate role to play in civic and political life, other Christians here, citing Rom 13:1, view politics as “unspiritual and heretical,” arguing that “everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities.”

“It’s a double-edged sword,” Mr. Chan said. “[The crisis] is a purging process that makes us purer, stronger and wiser, but it’s also an opportunity for some to get in with the ‘right’ side’ of the government.”

Christians have to “wake up and ask questions,” he said. “Are we going to continue [being comfortable and subordinate], or are we waking up to core Christian values, to be the salt and light of the world?”

“Martyrdom and persecution have always been the Christian church’s heritage. Jesus said, ‘Take up the cross to follow me,’” Mr. Chan added. “We can’t ask to be exempted.”

Both men believe that the Chinese government’s forceful message will intimidate many churches into closing their facilities to protesters; and in the long run, the government may punish outspoken churches by making it difficult for them to apply for land and other resources for their school plans and other services.

“This attack will lead to internal conflicts in churches because many are already [political] conservatives,” Mr. Ying said. The Communist Party will also start a fresh round of “United Front” work, he said, referring to China’s official efforts to co-opt sources of potential opposition to the party, such as churches and political parties, “to get those who could be brought round to their side and isolate those who are disobedient.”

\_\_\_\_\_ *Verna Yu contributes from Hong Kong.*

## IMPORTANT DATES IN 2020

It is too late to mark the start of a new liturgical year; that began with the first Sunday of Advent, on Dec. 1. But you have already experienced the change at Mass: The church is now in Year A of its three-year Lectionary cycle. The Sunday Mass readings are chosen around the Gospel of Matthew (with Mark and Luke to follow in subsequent years).

As for the secular world, Jan. 1 marks a new year that is the last in the four-year cycle of U.S. presidential politics; 2020 also brings the Summer Olympics and multiple commemorations of the 75th anniversary of the close of World War II.

### CELEBRATIONS OF THE LITURGICAL YEAR 2020

<b>Jan. 1</b>	Solemnity of Mary*
<b>Jan. 5</b>	Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord
<b>Jan. 12</b>	The Baptism of the Lord
<b>Feb. 26</b>	Ash Wednesday
<b>March 19</b>	Solemnity of Saint Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary
<b>March 25</b>	Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord
<b>April 5</b>	Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord
<b>April 10</b>	Good Friday
<b>April 12</b>	Easter Sunday
<b>April 19</b>	Divine Mercy Sunday
<b>May 21</b>	The Ascension of the Lord (Thursday)*
<b>May 31</b>	Pentecost Sunday
<b>June 7</b>	Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity
<b>June 14</b>	The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ (Corpus Christi)
<b>June 19</b>	Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus
<b>June 24</b>	Solemnity of the Nativity of Saint John the Baptist
<b>June 29</b>	Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul, Apostles
<b>Aug. 15</b>	Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary**
<b>Nov. 1</b>	Solemnity of All Saints**
<b>Nov. 2</b>	The Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed (All Souls Day)
<b>Nov. 22</b>	Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe (Christ the King)
<b>Nov. 29</b>	First Sunday of Advent
<b>Dec. 8</b>	Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary*
<b>Dec. 25</b>	The Nativity of the Lord (Christmas)*

\*Holy Day of Obligation

\*\*Not a separate Holy Day of Obligation in 2020 because it falls on a Saturday or Sunday

### THE LITURGICAL SEASONS

**Dec. 1, 2019–Jan. 12:** Advent, Christmas  
**Jan. 13–Feb. 25:** Ordinary Time  
**Feb. 26–May 31:** Lent, Triduum, Easter  
**June 1–Nov. 28:** Ordinary Time  
**Nov. 29–Jan. 10, 2021:** Advent, Christmas



CNS photo/Paul Haring


Pope Francis holds his pastoral staff as he celebrates Mass marking the feast of All Souls at Laurentino Cemetery in Rome on Nov. 2, 2018.

### OTHER DATES OF NOTE

**Jan. 24:** March for Life  
**Feb. 3:** Iowa presidential caucuses  
**Feb. 11:** New Hampshire presidential primary  
**March 13:** Anniversary of the election of Pope Francis  
**March 15:** N.C.A.A. basketball tournament (“March Madness”) begins  
**April 22:** World Earth Day  
**June 10:** G7 Summit  
**July 13:** Democratic National Convention  
**July 20:** Summer Olympics (Tokyo)  
**Aug. 24:** Republican National Convention  
**Sept. 29:** First presidential debate (at Notre Dame University)  
**Nov. 3:** U.S. Election Day

### ANNIVERSARIES OF HISTORICAL EVENTS

**Jan. 17:** Prohibition bans the sale of alcohol in the U.S. (1920)  
**Feb. 11:** Nelson Mandela released from prison (1990)  
**March 24:** Assassination of Archbishop Oscar Romero in El Salvador (1980)  
**March 25:** Publication of “Evangelium Vitae” (1995)  
**April 2:** Death of St. John Paul II (2005)  
**May 8:** Birth of Fulton Sheen (1895)  
**May 8:** Victory in Europe Day (1945)  
**May 24:** Publication of “Laudato Si’” (2015)  
**Aug. 6:** Atomic bombing of Hiroshima (1945)  
**Aug. 18:** 19th Amendment gives women the right to vote (1920)  
**Sept. 26:** First televised U.S. presidential debate (Kennedy v. Nixon) (1960)  
**Sept. 27:** Jesuits receive charter from Pope Paul III (1540)  
**Oct. 24:** United Nations founded (1945)  
**Nov. 11:** Mayflower Compact signed (1620)  
**Nov. 21:** “Bloody Sunday” / war of independence in Ireland (1920)  
**Nov. 23:** Nuremberg Trials (1945)



Julian LeBarón, center, embraces Erika García, left, and an unidentified woman before a protest against the leadership of President López Obrador in Mexico City on Dec. 1.

## After the LeBarón family massacre, can Mexico's López Obrador stop the violence?

“I think he’s a good man, yes,” Julián LeBarón said, describing his encounter with President Andrés Manuel López Obrador of Mexico in early December. “I think he has the best intentions,” he said. “But the road to hell is paved with good intentions. We didn’t make him president for what he intends to do, but for what he can do.”

Just over a month had passed since nine members of Mr. LeBarón’s extended family—three mothers and six children—were massacred on Nov. 4, victims of a hit squad of suspected drug cartel members near the Sonoran town of Bavispe, about 70 miles south of the U.S. border.

Mr. LeBarón’s family has been part of a generational movement of fundamentalist Mormons to northern Mexico from the United States that founded the La Mora Mormon community. Though many have been born in Mexico, they retain strong ties with the United States. It remains unclear whether the massacre was the result of mistaken identity or if the gunmen deliberately targeted the family.

Mr. LeBarón said he hopes he can channel the grief and anger over the killings into a broad social movement against violence and impunity in Mexico.

“We want to unite the whole country. We want a social movement, not a political one,” he said.

The brutality of the LeBarón massacre was a shock even to the violence-weary Mexican public. The killings added to growing doubts about whether the government of the populist President López Obrador is capable of delivering on promises to end the country’s decade-long drug war. Mr. López Obrador was elected in 2018 on a wave of anger over violence, impunity and corruption.

On Dec. 2, Mr. LeBarón and many members of his family met with Mr. López Obrador in Mexico City for an update about the investigation into the massacre. Mexican authorities announced several arrests in the case.

He called the meeting a positive experience and remains hopeful that at least some of the killers may be brought to justice, but Mr. LeBarón has little confidence in the current Mexican government’s capacity to put an end to the unprecedented violence. With more than 36,000 Mexicans murdered by early December, 2019 proved to be the deadliest year in recent memory.

“What is positive about the investigation is that the [U.S.] F.B.I. is involved,” Mr. LeBarón said. “If they manage to help get results, then perhaps we can replicate that and get rid of the [Mexican security officials] who are getting paid to investigate but don’t deliver,” he said. The victims held dual U.S. and Mexican citizenship, producing outrage and condemnation north of the border as well.

“I have my doubts about whether President López Obrador understands the magnitude of the problem, however,” he added. “If he did, he would immediately abandon all the social programs he’s talking about now and would prioritize security completely. If a country doesn’t have security, its society can’t aspire to anything other than living in fear.”

Despite the targeting of his family and attacks against him by the president’s online supporters, Mr. LeBarón was adamant that he wants to stay in Mexico. “I was born here. My children are the fifth generation of my family born and raised in this country. I don’t want to leave,” he said sharply.

“Look at these hands. I’m a normal person. I work, I break my back to take care of my family,” he said. “It’s the government’s responsibility to make the country safe for its citizens. If it can’t do that, then we need to unite to demand that it does.”

Jan-Albert Hootsen, *Mexico City correspondent.*  
Twitter: @Jahootsen.



## Father Sosa 'dreams' of a Society of Jesus that 'builds a future full of hope'

"We Jesuits are people of hope; we believe another world is possible," Arturo Sosa, S.J., the superior general of the Society of Jesus, told journalists at an end-of-year reception at the Jesuit Curia in Rome on Dec. 4. The Venezuelan-born head of the Jesuits said that in his travels on all continents he has witnessed "so much frustration among so many people" in the face of "inequality and poverty," together with "the forced movement of persons" and "the difficulty" so many people have to be able to "live in freedom and democracy."

He said the Society of Jesus is responding to those challenges today "as part of that movement of peoples toward a future where every human being and all peoples can live with dignity, security" and be able "to develop their cultural creativity and seek to reach their dreams."

He said his "dream" for the Society of Jesus "is that it collaborates more and more to build a future full of hope."

Jesuits worldwide laid the groundwork for this challenging work, he said, when a two-year process of discernment identified four universal apostolic preferences as the road map to guide and inspire all their activities over the next decade: to show the way to God through discernment

and the spiritual exercises; to walk with the poor, the outcasts of the world, those whose dignity has been violated, in a mission of reconciliation and justice; to accompany young people in the creation of a hope-filled future; and to collaborate in the care of our common home.

Father Sosa, who is the first Latin American to lead the worldwide Society of Jesus, expressed his wish to give fuller participation to women in the life of the church and said that while it is "a complex question" and also related to the role of women in society, he advocated giving women "managerial/decision-making roles" in the church, though separating this from the question of priestly ordination. He noted that today, for example, many Jesuit schools and universities "are in the hands of women" and other laypeople, a development that has happened over the past 30 years.

Father Sosa stressed the educational role Jesuits are playing and will continue to play through their schools and universities, and he envisaged greater networking in order to have "a global impact."

The Jesuit mission, he said, involves the Gospel-inspired dimensions of "faith, social justice and reconciliation of people with God, with each other and with nature."





Photo by Jeremy Zippie, S.J.

A global impact: Celebrating Garifuna Settlement Day on Nov. 24 at the Jesuit-run St. Martin de Porres Parish in Belize City, Belize.

He recalled that such work has led to martyrdom, not only for Jesuits but also for women and men who work with them, as happened 30 years ago at the University of Central America in El Salvador. That experience, he said, “showed the power of hope and of life over the power of evil and [over] the power of the devil that still exists as a force that seeks to destroy our efforts.” He added that “the devil throws himself in the way across God’s plan and the work of salvation done in Christ.”

Father Sosa said that over the next decade the Jesuits would continue in their efforts to assist migrants, refugees and displaced persons “as a concrete expression of our faith that leads us to open a future of hope.” Though Jesuits seek to serve, not to become martyrs, he acknowledged that this work could entail martyrdom, as has been the case in recent times in South Sudan and Syria, adding that “fear cannot stop me sending people to such apostolic works.”

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



Celine Khater, 4, offers food donations to Maronite Scout Angelo Fahed.

CNS photo/Doreen Abi Raad

## GOODNEWS: In Lebanon, sharing during a Christmastime of crisis

Food collections at Advent and Christmas are regular seasonal efforts around the Christian world, but a campaign in Beirut, Lebanon, took on added significance this year. Since antigovernment uprisings began in October, banks have imposed limits on withdrawals, the value of the Lebanese pound has plummeted, and a reported 160,000 jobs have been lost or suspended. At least three people committed suicide in the first weeks of December, reportedly because of stress related to the country’s political and economic crises.

Hoping to brighten an otherwise bleak Christmas, the Maronite Girl Guides and Boy Scouts of St. Joseph Maronite Catholic Parish in Mtaileb, north of Beirut, initiated a food drive. “We want to help people feel the joy of Christmas,” Sabine Bou Serhal, 22, a leader for the group, said.

On the weekend of Dec. 14-15, the Guides and Scouts carried out their project at two supermarkets, asking shoppers to purchase some additional food items.

“We worried that people would be reluctant to give. But thank God, people are helping us,” Ms. Bou Serhal said.

Donations from individuals and families ranged from a single item to several grocery bags. One shopper delivered an overflowing grocery cart.

Tamar Cholakian, a 33-year-old English teacher, joined in. “Because of the crisis, it’s more important than ever to help. Giving, helping, sharing: That’s the true spirit of Christmas,” she said. “Many people don’t have enough money for food. People are desperate.”

Nayaf Zainaty, a Maronite priest who is the spiritual director for the two youth groups, explained: “We’re helping not only Christian families, but Muslims as well. Christmas is not just for Christians. Jesus was born for all people, everywhere.”

Doreen Abi Raad, *Catholic News Service.*

# THE PRICE WE PAY

## How economic uncertainty is taking a spiritual toll on today's young adults

By Don Clemmer

The traumatic memory sticks with Emily Edmondson. Getting into her car after work, her husband climbing into the passenger seat, she turned the ignition and found the words to encapsulate her day.

“I just got sold.”

She meant this literally. The company where she had worked as a web developer for the past two years had done a “business structure update” in which they sold a number of their products and their employees to another company. She would keep the same day-to-day job, but, as an employee of the new company, would work as a contractor for the first company.

“Here, I’ll take your MacBooks, and you can have my Emily,” is how Ms. Edmondson, 27, characterized the move. “Like that’s what happened. They traded stuff, and I was one of the things that was traded.... And the executives who announced it to us announced it as like an exciting, strategic alignment update and didn’t understand why people were upset



about it, because nobody technically lost their job.”

“It made me feel worth less than a MacBook, actually,” she said.


Ms. Edmondson, who lives in Waco, Tex., did not start out in the corporate world. After working in parish ministry, she considered pursuing a doctorate in theology but instead turned to work in a field that she hoped would foster a more stable environment—predictable hours, better pay—for marriage and family life. Looking back, she says the choice didn’t achieve those ends.

“I have a less stable job situation in the corporate world because of trends toward layoffs, offshoring, outsourcing. If I wanted job security, I should go back to that parish,” she says.

### HARSH REALITY

Ms. Edmondson’s story reflects the unstable realities faced by many young adults today. For instance, nearly half of all U.S. millennials (those born between the early 1980s and mid ’90s) participate in some way in the gig economy—that is, the quickly growing sector of the job market made up of freelance and often temporary work. These workers make nearly 60 percent less than full-time employees, with only about 40 percent having access to employer-provided health benefits. Currently, 20 percent of millennials report workplace depression (more than other generations), and a study by the American Psychiatry Association found that three quarters of millennials felt somewhat or extremely anxious about paying their bills.





# There is a strong desire from young adults to stay close to family, but oftentimes the job market dictates otherwise. ●●

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But these realities pose more than financial and mental challenges to the young adults who experience them; they are spiritual challenges as well. Times of financial stress or uncertainty seem like a natural time to turn to one's faith, but it can also be one of the most difficult times to do so.

People who minister to these young adults can attest to this difficulty. Diana Hancharenko ministers to more than 40 young adults at St. Angela Merici Parish in Youngstown, Ohio, some as young as college age.

"Many of them work weekends. Many of them work evenings. So it's hard to get young adults into something that's consistent because of their work schedules," she says. She builds a supportive community where she can but notes, "I don't think we've all been in the same room together."

The picture she paints is reminiscent of Pope Francis' comments in a 2013 interview, that young people have been "crushed by the present," without hope for the future.

"The stress level of young adults is off the charts," she adds. "It's really challenging. We're seeing that reflected certainly in mental health issues." She also sees it in the guilt expressed by young adults who tell her they wish they could do more with the parish, but simply face too many demands in their daily lives: "Things are just so crazy right now—I just can't."

Ms. Hancharenko attempts to accommodate the varied schedules of those to whom she ministers, and she views this as the "new norm" for young adult ministry, a function of the gig economy many of them participate in. She sees students working multiple jobs to stave off crippling debt and young adults at times forced to move away from Youngstown in order to follow a new opportunity. The community is reeling from job losses in the steel and automotive industries in recent decades.

"There is a strong desire from young adults to stay close to family, but oftentimes the job market dictates otherwise," Ms. Hancharenko says. "That can be a really huge struggle."

Landis Erwin, 29, is a young adult who did development work for the Diocese of Youngstown until a job opportunity drew her to Pittsburgh. While this amounted to a fulfilling step forward in her career, it also meant she had one experience common to Catholics of her generation—leaving a parish community where they felt very connected and supported.

"She's struggling to find that in her new location," Ms. Hancharenko says.

Ms. Erwin says that people her age struggle to trust other people because of the widespread uncertainty they have encountered in the pursuit of jobs and economic stability.

"Economically, we're just trying to find our way," she says. "It's interesting the pressure the world puts on young adults, but the help they're not willing to provide them."

Now working for a foundation that helps provide youth with access to Catholic education, Ms. Erwin has not scaled back her idealism, but many in her generation do that.

Nick Lopez, also 29, is the director of campus ministry at his alma mater, the University of Dallas, and was one of three U.S. auditors to a pre-synod event in 2018 prior to the Synod of Bishops on young people, the faith and vocational discernment in Rome. He sees on campus what Diana Hancharenko sees at the parish level: young people with hearts for service choosing not to pursue their dreams in a field where they might "make a difference" and opting instead for a career path—sometimes under pressure from their families—deemed more practical or simply "worth the investment" of a college education. It is no wonder, considering that, according to the Federal Reserve, more than half of those who attend college will take on some debt and debt.org lists the average student debt in 2017 as 37,172.

Mr. Lopez recognizes that he is something of an outlier among his generation. He has served in his current job for six years, whereas fellow classmates now find themselves on their third and fourth jobs since graduation, driven to find work that pays enough for them to "live above water," especially with educational debt factored in.

With these frequent moves, Lopez says, "they're not at any one physical church for very long." He tries to counter the difficulties alumni face in finding the stability of a parish community by reaching out to dioceses and getting recommendations for them so that they can find "those much-needed relationships."

"I see it every year. I see our seniors graduate. I sit

with them. I provide mostly pastoral care,” he says. “I walk through these stresses with them.”

Mr. Lopez and Ms. Hancharenko both attest that these realities are a departure from the experience of previous generations.

“That reality is very different,” Ms. Hancharenko says. “But I don’t hear many people asking why things are different.”

## FINDING ROOTS

If symptoms of the realities faced by young adults include unpredictable work hours, high job turnover, transience and burnout, the causes are actually pretty straightforward, says Kate Ward, an assistant professor of theological ethics at Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisc. Ms. Ward, 36, cites stagnated wages, student loan debt and health care costs as factors that distinguish the experience of young adults today from that of earlier generations.

On the macro level, these realities are captured in data from the Federal Reserve. In mid 2019, millennials held 3.2 percent of household wealth in the United States. In 1989, when a mid-range baby boomer would have been about the same age as older millennials are now, boomers had 20.9 percent of U.S. household wealth. CNN reported in 2018 that two-thirds of young adults ages 21 to 32 had nothing saved for retirement.

The instability created by this, Ms. Ward says, leads young adults to delay starting families, past both the age when their parents would have started and even past the age when many of today’s young adults want to, a reality Pope Francis even acknowledged in his 2016 apostolic exhortation, “*Amoris Laetitia*.”

Ms. Edmonson’s story echoes this reality, too. She and her husband have moved virtually every year. They would love to become foster parents but have delayed pursuing the possibility, as each relocation would restart the process. “This company is allowed to put me wherever they want at any time,” she says.

“I would hope that Catholics would see the family life thing as a canary in the coal mine,” Ms. Ward says. “Those of us who have been able to start families, who grew up in stable families, can see that there’s a whole network of support and structures that have to be in place for that to go well. And the millennial generation is not finding those supports and structures in place.”

Ms. Ward cites her own experience of having a baby and the shock her parents experienced over the high insurance deductible she and her husband paid, a cost that could

be a deterrent for many young people hoping to start families. “Maybe that [lack of support] can kind of remind the church that we do have this tradition of advocating for economic justice policies,” she says, “not just because they’re a good thing, but because the basic unit of society is not the individual but the family.”

Jonathan Lewis, assistant secretary for pastoral ministry of the Archdiocese of Washington, sees the move by large archdioceses like Washington and Chicago to implement substantial family leave policies as examples of the church recognizing that it not only ministers to individuals but is an institutional stakeholder in society.

“The church is always sort of weaving between being rooted in a particular culture, for its benefits and its limitations, and being prophetic in speaking to that culture,” he says. “I think people would have a lot more kids if they had confidence in child care, things like that.”

Mr. Lewis, 33 and a parent himself, understands the pressures faced by young adults, such as how student loan debt can turn education into a hindrance to advancement, and sees that betrayal by institutions as a key challenge faced by the church in reaching that demographic. In 2018, Lewis participated as an auditor in the Synod of Bishops on young people, the faith and vocational discernment, engaging at the global level with the church’s dialogue over these issues. There he came to appreciate the valuable role mentoring and intergenerational dialogue can play. Mr. Lewis notes Pope Francis’ affinity for the prophet Joel’s words about the dreams of the young and visions of the elderly being held together and says the church is uniquely positioned to realize this.

“If you were visioning how you might contrive this... where people were rooted in local communities, actually gathered together in a common place in a local community... all ages, you wouldn’t segregate, everyone could come and be welcome—well that’s a parish!” Mr. Lewis says. “We’ve got the ingredients. Unfortunately, this reality of broad social disengagement affects our ecclesial life as well.”

It is a challenge Diana Hancharenko in Youngstown sees playing out constantly at the parish level.

“I hear a lot from the older generation, ‘Well we made it work.’ I think it’s easier to just kind of cast the blame and say, ‘Oh, well [young people] just don’t care. They’re not into their faith. They’re not interested,’” Ms. Hancharenko says. “A conversation I’ve had to have many times with some of our older parishioners, as well-meaning as they are, is: How are you approaching our young people if you haven’t seen



them here in a while? Are you doing it with, ‘Hey, it’s nice to see you?’ or the attitude of ‘Where have you been?’”

### THE SUSTAINABILITY QUESTIONS

Pope Francis has spoken of the need to see “individual persons, one at a time,” an urging that, if followed, leads to much-needed personal connections, which in turn help to build the sort of supportive community needed to weather the storm of challenges young people face.

“My question is: You want people to come back to the parish. Why? What are you offering?” says Timone Davis, an assistant professor of pastoral theology at Loyola University in Chicago, who has designed ministry modules that include practical components for helping young adults navigate life. “You can get young people to be in your parish, but if you’re not trying to have a relationship, you can forget it.”

Tracey Lamont works with a variety of ministry leaders in postgraduate work through her role as an assistant professor of religious education at Loyola University New Orleans. She says she sees an ache for “relationships and relational ministry” all the time.

“We’re so distanced and so wounded by one another,” she says. Ms. Lamont echoes Ms. Davis, adding that the way forward is not in programming but in the nuts and bolts of relationships. Whole populations are missing from ministry because they cannot accommodate the traditional ministry schedules. Ms. Lamont highlights this need for ministry to go out and cross boundaries of race, class and gender.

Paul Jarzembowski, assistant director for youth and young adult ministries for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, says economic wounds are certainly within the purview of the “field hospital” church Pope Francis seeks to build, noting that the pope cited the value and challenges of work numerous times in his apostolic exhortation “Christus Vivit” in 2019.

“I think the fact that he raised up work in that document says that we need to be paying more attention to it than we do in our ministry efforts,” Mr. Jarzembowski says. He sees Francis, in document after document, laying a foundation for the church to engage in the realities of people’s lives, building trust through listening and accompaniment. He notes that the history of the church in the United



States—with its heavy involvement with unions and the labor movement—suggests a precedent. Whether it is labor or climate change, Mr. Jarzembowski says, “Pope Francis is giving us a philosophy to take action on it. The question is, will we?”

Action is precisely what Luke Henkel, 29, seeks from his church as an outreach coordinator for the group Laudato Si’ Generation, the youth branch of the Global Catholic Climate Movement, and as chair of the creation care team at St. James Cathedral in Seattle.

“Young people have so much skin in the game about their future, and a lot of it revolves around this work on fixing our climate,” he says. “If we want to be successful in continuing to engage people, we have to be where they are. We have to be on the forefront of their concerns.” He adds that the climate crisis is for the church a “golden opportunity to engage young people on the deeper things that pull them forward.”

As he pursues his passion, Mr. Henkel sees the connection between the climate crisis and the socioeconomic stress he and his contemporaries have inherited. Both are existential crises created in part by the consumption models embraced in decades past by earlier generations. Both climate issues and consumerism raise big questions about sustainability. And several studies point to the fact that the current stressors on young adults are having long-term and serious effects. According to a 2019 study noting the recent decline of U.S. life expectancy, the most significant spike in death rates from 2010 to 2017 occurred among adults age 25 to 34, a 29-percent increase. The picture is one of a generation in a mortal struggle against a throwaway culture



2



Photo courtesy Luke Henkel

3

in which their jobs, their homes and their parishes can or even should be easily swapped out for another if the economy so dictates.

“It’s increasingly difficult. It’s increasingly complicated. I don’t think it’s healthy for our young people,” says Ms. Hancharenko.

“The transitory nature of some young adults is leading them to be exceptionally isolated and lonely. And so that’s where I worry,” says Ms. Lamont. “That feeling of being disconnected is really detrimental to one’s psyche, to their ability to form relationships, their ability to even trust.”

Ms. Ward sees hope in the fact that structural fixes like student loan forgiveness and universal basic income proposals have found their way into parts of the policy conversation because the status quo is, to her, a non-starter.

“I think it’s sustainable if you’re an employer who wants to employ people at low wages and be able to get rid of them without having to accommodate for their human needs,” Ms. Ward says. “Is this sustainable from the perspective of families? Or is it sustainable if you’re someone who cares about strong communities that can care for their elderly and their young and maintain a sense of stability in a place? Then no, it’s not.”

In the meantime, Emily Edmondson in Texas continues to strive to live out her faith as best she can in the midst of economic and cultural challenges. She says she has had to warn managers months in advance of her desire to go to Mass during her lunch hour on holy days of obligation. She has been met with mixed reactions. “I had one manager that was great with it,” she said, “and another manager that was like, ‘Why are you doing this? I don’t



Photo courtesy Nick Lopez

4

**1.** Landis Erwin, 29, did development work for the Diocese of Youngstown until a job opportunity drew her to Pittsburgh.

**2.** Emily Edmondson, 27, right, and her husband would love to become foster parents but have delayed pursuing the possibility because of frequent moves.

**3.** “Young people have so much skin in the game about their future,” said Luke Henkel, 29, left, an outreach coordinator for the group *Laudato Si’* Generation.

**4.** Nick Lopez, 29, center, is director of campus ministry at his alma mater, the University of Dallas. He is something of an outlier in his generation, as he has worked in the same job for six years.

care that it’s your lunch hour. It’s going to take you longer.’ It’s a gut-wrenching feeling.”

*Don Clemmer is a writer and communications professional who lives in Indiana.*

# THE MONKS AND THE MANUSCRIPTS

*How a group of scholars came to preserve ancient texts from around the globe*

By Columba Stewart

In 1142, a powerful Benedictine abbot traveled to Spain. Known as Peter the Venerable for his wisdom, he ruled a federation of 600 monasteries from his base at the Abbey of Cluny in Burgundy. The journey across the Pyrenees was long, and his agenda was packed with kings, bishops, abbots and complex negotiations. Abbot Peter's visit to Toledo, which had been reconquered a few decades earlier after almost four centuries of Muslim rule, led him to a surprising decision. He summoned Christian scholars of Arabic and set them to work translating Islamic texts into Latin. Pre-eminent among them was the Quran itself, entrusted to an English cleric who had learned Arabic to gain access to scientific literature in that language, including Arabic translations of otherwise lost classical Greek texts.

What was this abbot thinking? He was not a scholar of comparative religion, as you might find in a modern university. He was a medieval abbot, facing a powerful and highly literate religious tradition he considered to be fundamentally incompatible with his own. His intention was adversarial. Nonetheless, he embraced the humanistic principle that to understand people of another culture, with different beliefs, we must listen to them in their own voice, learning their language, reading and understanding their texts.

As a Benedictine monk, Abbot Peter belonged to a community of readers engaged in the study of Christian sacred texts and related literature. That is the truth behind the familiar trope of a monk

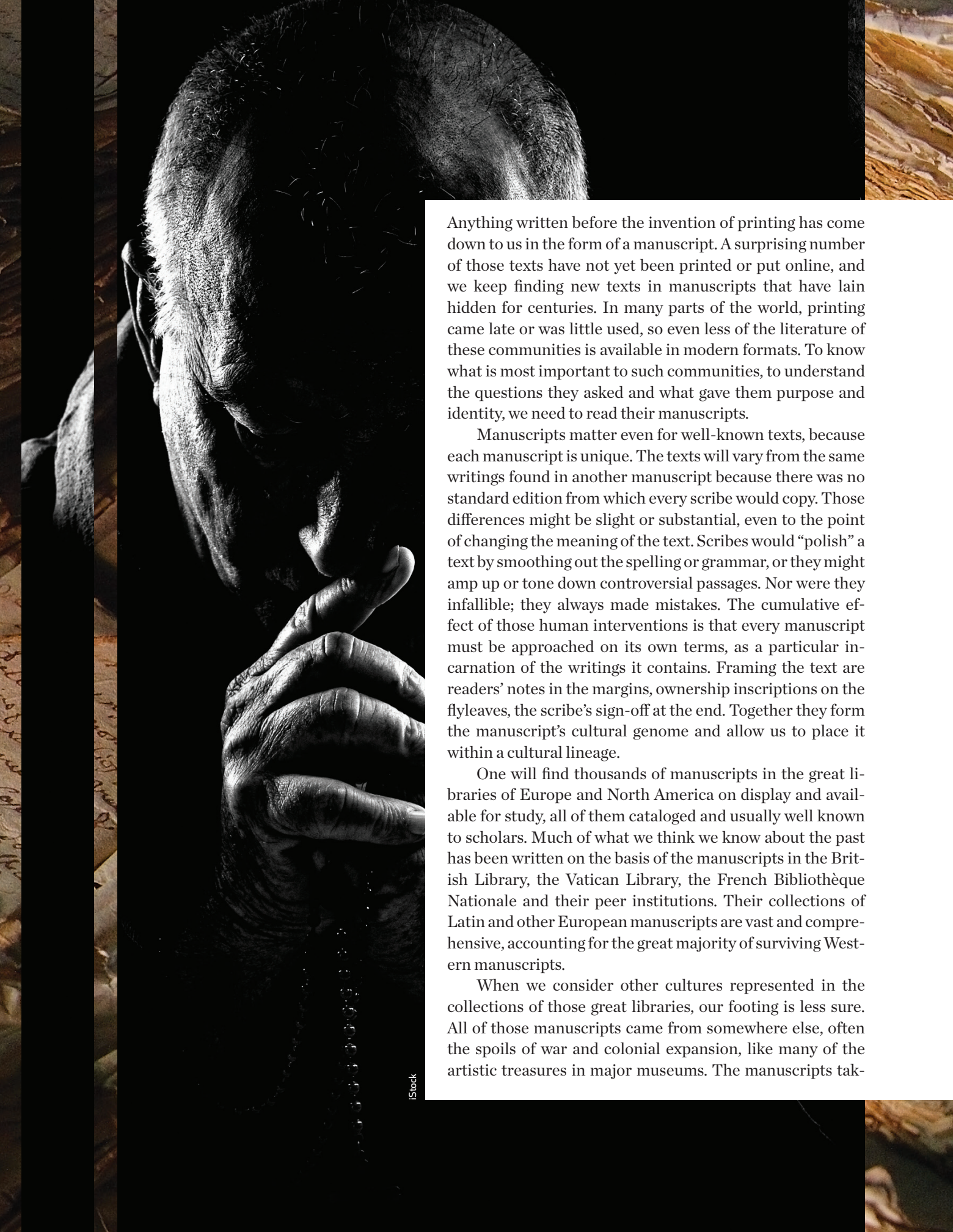
hunched over a copy desk, quill in hand, writing texts on reams of parchment: a belief in the power of words. Their labor of copying was for the sake of learning, learning for the sake of understanding, understanding for the sake of worship and thanksgiving. Abbot Peter could see that the same was true of the followers of Islam. That shared experience made intellectual engagement—and debate—possible.

We monks put down deep roots and try to cultivate through communal monastic practices the grounded humanity that Greek philosophers and their Christian heirs characterized as learning “to dwell with the self” (*habitare secum*). At its best, that monastic stability frees the mind to roam widely and to make unexpected applications of what is found. Alongside the theological tomes would be texts of philosophy, grammar and mathematics, astronomy and history, medicine and law. Benedictines have always been inventors or early adopters of technology. Clocks were developed in the Middle Ages to wake up monks for early prayers. The introduction of movable type and mechanical printing came as a great relief: The second book printed on Gutenberg's equipment was a Benedictine psalter.

## What We Learn From Manuscripts

Even though manuscripts—handwritten books—are at least several technological stages behind the ways we access information today, we still rely on them for access to the past. Consider:





Anything written before the invention of printing has come down to us in the form of a manuscript. A surprising number of those texts have not yet been printed or put online, and we keep finding new texts in manuscripts that have lain hidden for centuries. In many parts of the world, printing came late or was little used, so even less of the literature of these communities is available in modern formats. To know what is most important to such communities, to understand the questions they asked and what gave them purpose and identity, we need to read their manuscripts.

Manuscripts matter even for well-known texts, because each manuscript is unique. The texts will vary from the same writings found in another manuscript because there was no standard edition from which every scribe would copy. Those differences might be slight or substantial, even to the point of changing the meaning of the text. Scribes would “polish” a text by smoothing out the spelling or grammar, or they might amp up or tone down controversial passages. Nor were they infallible; they always made mistakes. The cumulative effect of those human interventions is that every manuscript must be approached on its own terms, as a particular incarnation of the writings it contains. Framing the text are readers’ notes in the margins, ownership inscriptions on the flyleaves, the scribe’s sign-off at the end. Together they form the manuscript’s cultural genome and allow us to place it within a cultural lineage.

One will find thousands of manuscripts in the great libraries of Europe and North America on display and available for study, all of them cataloged and usually well known to scholars. Much of what we think we know about the past has been written on the basis of the manuscripts in the British Library, the Vatican Library, the French Bibliothèque Nationale and their peer institutions. Their collections of Latin and other European manuscripts are vast and comprehensive, accounting for the great majority of surviving Western manuscripts.

When we consider other cultures represented in the collections of those great libraries, our footing is less sure. All of those manuscripts came from somewhere else, often the spoils of war and colonial expansion, like many of the artistic treasures in major museums. The manuscripts tak-

en to Western libraries provide only a partial view of their source cultures. To rely on them alone is akin to looking at a mummy in a museum display and assuming we understand ancient Egyptians. What about the manuscripts the European and American explorers and collectors never found? Or the cultures they were not interested in plundering?

### **Saving Cultural Treasures From War**

The work I do today to preserve manuscripts began in 1965 as an effort by my monastery to microfilm Latin manuscripts in European Benedictine libraries. It was two decades after the devastation of the Second World War, three years after the Cuban missile crisis and during a very chilly phase of the Cold War. We feared that the European Benedictine heritage would be vaporized if there were a World War III. Monte Cassino in Italy, the mother abbey of the Benedictines, had been totally destroyed in 1944. A nuclear war would be far more devastating.

There was nothing we monks in Minnesota could do to protect the churches and cloisters, but we could microfilm their manuscripts and keep backup copies in the United States. The Vatican Library had done something similar in the 1950s, depositing microfilms of many of its manuscripts at Saint Louis University in Missouri. Our project started in Benedictine monasteries in Austria, employing local technicians to involve them in the preservation of their own heritage. The scope of the work soon widened to libraries of other religious orders, then to universities and national libraries. The pace was swift, and the result, by the end of the 20th century, was a film archive of almost 85,000 Western manuscripts.

Along the way there came a serendipitous event that changed the course of the project. An American scholar of biblical texts approached us with the idea of microfilming manuscripts in the monasteries and churches of Ethiopia. This great African nation is the home of an ancient Christian community that had never undergone the narrowing of the biblical canon—the official list of writings constituting the Christian Bible—that occurred in other parts of the early Christian world. Consequently, Ethiopian Christians preserved a broad array of writings later excluded from the Bible of the Byzantine and Roman traditions. Microfilming began in 1971, with the work done by Ethiopians, the technical support from us and funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities, among other foundations.

The situation in Ethiopia worsened when a violent revolution deposed the emperor and installed a communist government hostile to the church. What had begun as a kind

of archeological expedition to discover ancient texts became a rescue project to preserve manuscripts in a nation convulsed by political upheaval and then a civil war. The cameras kept going, working throughout the 1970s, 1980s and into the early 1990s. In the end, 9,000 manuscripts were microfilmed under often-harrowing circumstances.

The Ethiopian Manuscript Microfilm Library also demonstrates what happens to manuscripts in times of turmoil. A few years back, a professor from Howard University approached one of our experts for help identifying an Ethiopian manuscript recently donated to the university. She showed him photographs of the manuscript, and he recognized it as one of the thousands microfilmed in our project. After it was photographed in 1976, the manuscript had been taken out of Ethiopia and found its way into a private collection in the United States.

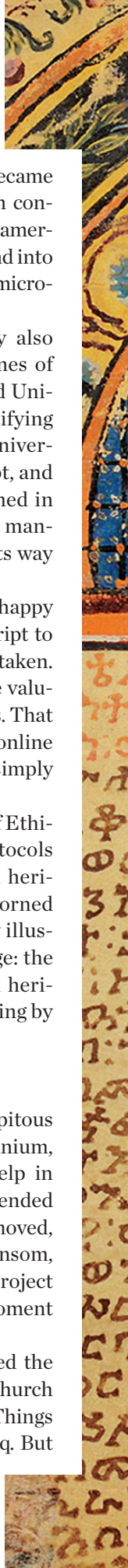
Unlike most stories of this kind, this one had a happy ending: Howard University repatriated the manuscript to the monastery in Ethiopia from which it had been taken. Sadly more typical is the case of another, even more valuable, Ethiopian manuscript microfilmed in the 1970s. That one is now in a well-known private collection. In its online catalog, the provenance given for the manuscript is simply the name of the dealer from whom it was purchased.

By the time those manuscripts were taken out of Ethiopia, the colonial era was over. International protocols and national laws regulated the export of cultural heritage. Neither of these manuscripts should have adorned a private collection or enriched a dealer. This story illustrates two of the greatest threats to cultural heritage: the desperation that leads people to sell off their own heritage in order to feed their families and the profiteering by those who exploit that misfortune.

### **Lebanon and Syria**

The Ethiopian project inspired another serendipitous chapter in our work. Just after the turn of the millennium, Orthodox Christians in Lebanon asked for our help in dealing with the aftermath of a civil war that had ended about a decade earlier. Collections had been moved, valuable manuscripts had been stolen and held for ransom, and some had simply disappeared. We launched a project in northern Lebanon in April 2003, at the same moment that U.S. ground forces were approaching Baghdad.

As our work in Lebanon expanded, we extended the project to Syria, forming partnerships with several church leaders in Aleppo, as well as in Homs and Damascus. Things were going well, and we even found a partner in Iraq. But





**1.** From left to right, Columba Stewart, O.S.B.; Archbishop Najeeb Michael of Mosul; and Walid Mourad, director of field operations, H.M.M.L., Middle East and Africa, “hitchhiking” in Northern Iraq.

**2.** Walid Mourad trains local digitization technicians in Bamako, Mali.

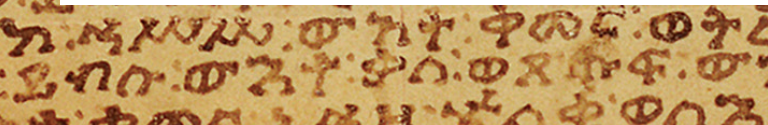
Photos courtesy of HMML




then, in 2011, Syria began to unravel as the spirit of the Arab Spring spread across the region. Three years later came the conquest by ISIS of much of northern Iraq, driving tens of thousands of Christians and Yazidis from Mosul and the villages of the Nineveh Plain.

ISIS broadcast videos of its crude but effective demolition of ancient Assyrian and Christian monuments in Iraq, and we watched the destruction of so much in Syria, including historic places like Palmyra. In Turkey, where we had worked with the Armenian community in Istanbul, and more extensively in the Syriac Christian libraries of the southeast, the areas we had visited so many times became no-go zones because of rising tensions between Kurds and Turks. As is often the case for ethnic and religious minorities, the Christians—those who had not already emigrated—were caught in the middle.

The human toll among our friends and colleagues was immense. In 2013, the Syriac Orthodox bishop of Aleppo, Mor Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim, was kidnapped along with his Greek Orthodox counterpart, Metropolitan Boulos Yazigi. They were never heard from again. Mor Gregorios had been an enthusiastic supporter of our work with his community’s manuscripts in Aleppo. Many of those man-





# Manuscripts matter even for well-known texts, because each manuscript is unique. ●●

Manuscripts had been carried to Aleppo in 1923 as Christians fled the Turkish city of Sanliurfa, known in ancient times as Edessa, the very cradle of Syriac Christianity.

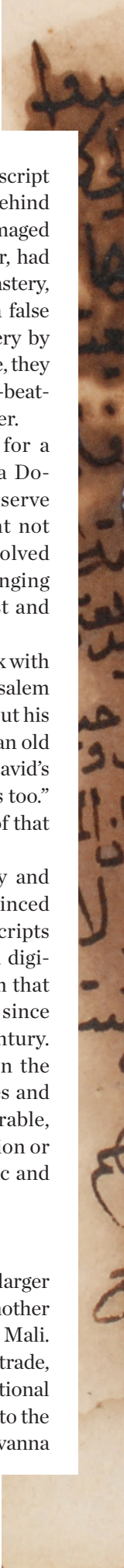
## **Qaraqosh, Iraq**

In Iraq it would be even worse. Our partner there, Najeeb Michael, a Dominican friar, had established a center for digitization of Christian manuscripts in Qaraqosh, an ancient Christian village between Mosul and Erbil. Since 1750, Father Najeeb's community had been in Mosul, the ancient city of Nineveh where the prophet Jonah preached repentance. The kidnapping and murder of the Chaldean Catholic Archbishop Paul Rahho in 2008 made it too dangerous for clergy to remain in Mosul, and they relocated to Qaraqosh. With our help, his team digitized thousands of Syriac, Arabic and Armenian manuscripts.

Then came the summer of 2014, the summer of ISIS. It did not seem at that time that ISIS was moving east from Mosul into the Nineveh Plain, and Father Najeeb's village of Qaraqosh was guarded by Kurdish militias as part of the outer ring of defenses of their autonomous region. Nonetheless, Father Najeeb decided to begin to move the manuscripts and archives of the Dominicans to Erbil, the capital of Iraqi Kurdistan. It was a wise move.

On the morning of Aug. 6, the feast of the Transfiguration of Jesus, the Kurdish guards in Qaraqosh retreated from an ISIS advance. Residents of that and the many other villages of the Nineveh Plain had only hours to grab what they could and get to Erbil, travelling 40 miles in the heat of the Iraqi summer. I visited them many times, marveling at how they recreated a kind of village life in the refugee camps.

As the refugees started over in Erbil, ISIS was demolishing ancient Nimrud with barrel bombs, destroying the artifacts in the Mosul museum with sledgehammers and dynamiting churches. Only after the retreat of ISIS from the Nineveh Plain in 2016 and the final reconquest of Mo-



sul in 2017 did the picture become clear. Major manuscript collections in Mosul had been destroyed, leaving behind only the digital images and a handful of severely damaged volumes. Most collections outside of Mosul, however, had been saved. This was the case at Mar Behnam Monastery, where some 500 manuscripts were hidden behind a false wall during the two-year occupation of the monastery by ISIS. When the monks returned to their wrecked home, they found the manuscripts safe in their hiding place, a still-beating heart in the battered and bruised body of the cloister.

I began this essay with Peter the Venerable for a reason. For a Benedictine monk to partner with a Dominican friar or a Syriac Orthodox bishop to preserve Christian manuscripts is understandable. It might not be as readily apparent why we have become so involved with the digital preservation of manuscripts belonging to Muslim communities in Africa, the Middle East and south Asia.

In 2013, the Palestinian field director for our work with Christian manuscript libraries in the Old City of Jerusalem told me about a recent conversation with a friend about his work preserving manuscripts. The friend belongs to an old and distinguished Muslim family. Fascinated by David's work, he said, "What about us? We have manuscripts too." On my next trip to Jerusalem, I met with members of that family and saw their library.

As I learned more about their family's library and discussed the project with our board, I became convinced that we must work with them. Their Islamic manuscripts and the Syriac Christian manuscripts we had been digitizing at a monastery only a few minutes' walk from that home belong to a cultural ecosystem that has existed since the arrival of Islam in Palestine in the seventh century. Christians and Muslims have greeted each other in the streets, done business, engaged in religious disputes and have read each other's books. Like Peter the Venerable, their interest may have been for the sake of persuasion or refutation, but it also led to the sharing of scientific and historical knowledge.

## **Timbuktu, Mali**

This new phase of our work soon led to an even larger involvement with Islamic manuscript heritage from another fabled place: the desert city of Timbuktu in northern Mali. Timbuktu was at one time a center of political power, trade, religion and culture. Located in the Sahel, the transitional zone between the desert to the north and the savanna to the south, the city was the terminus of trans-Saharan, savanna



**3.** Beginning of the Gospel of John in a manuscript from Tigray Province, Ethiopia, from the monastery of Gunda Gunde.

**4.** Manuscript AG 2 from the Endä Abbä Garimä Monastery in Tigray Province, Ethiopia, one of two Abba Garima Gospel books dating from the sixth to the 10th century. It shows the beginning of the Gospel of Mark, with illuminations of the Evangelist. It can be viewed at the Virtual Hill Museum and Manuscript Library (vHMML.org).



and forest trade routes that brought salt, goods and travelers from North Africa and even beyond, as well as slaves and gold, textiles and other goods from the south. And, of course, there were manuscripts traveling the same pathways.


The recent story of Timbuktu is once again a tale of manuscripts moved and manuscripts hidden. Knowing that something was coming—as did Father Najeeb in Iraq—Dr. Abdel Kader Haidara quietly sent the manuscripts of his own family’s library and those of more than 30 other families up the Niger River to Bamako, the capital of Mali, in case the threats of religious and ethnic rebel groups to capture Timbuktu and purge its culture of supposed “non-Islamic” elements should come to pass.

In June 2012, those threats were realized. Timbuktu was occupied for several months, its shrines to Muslim saints destroyed, its superb music silenced, the tourist trade on which it depended for economic survival extinguished. Early reports suggesting that its manuscripts had been burned proved to be incorrect: Only a few manuscripts left behind as a false trail had been destroyed. All the others were safe, whether moved to Bamako or hidden in Timbuktu.

**5.** Father Bartholomew Al-Maqary of the Coptic Monastery of St. Macarius in Egypt, digitizing a 14th-century Gospel book.

**6.** Manuscript AG 1 from the Endä Abbä Garimä Monastery in Tigray Province, Ethiopia, one of two Abba Garima Gospel books dating from the sixth to 10th century. It can be viewed at the Virtual Hill Museum and Manuscript Library.

Photos courtesy of HMML



# In those manuscripts are stories, reflections on stories, ideas spun from human observation and experience. ●●

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## Why It Matters Here and Now

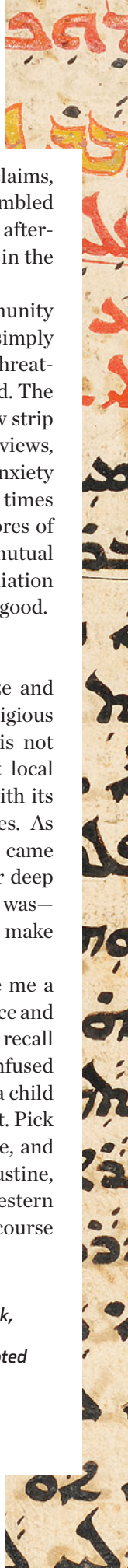
The intellectual pathways we trace in our preservation efforts reveal the original “internet of things,” the manuscripts that traveled in a merchant’s chest, in a monk’s pocket or in a pilgrim’s pouch across the known world. Their power was in their words, words usually read aloud, in the way of traditional reading. As listeners heard, they heard another person’s voice in real time.

In those manuscripts are stories, reflections on stories, ideas spun from human observation and experience. These manuscripts changed the world because their words were *heard*. They were taken seriously, seriously enough at times to prompt rebuttal or controversy, admiration or adoption. But they were *heard*.

We are at great risk of losing the capacity to listen and, therefore, of losing our ability to understand. The opening word of St. Benedict’s Rule is, appropriately, *obsculta*, or “listen.” Equally endangered are the stores of wisdom contained in the manuscripts of the world, targeted by those fearful of difference or threatened by imaginations broader than their own. The wisdom contained in them is eroded by the forgetting that besets a diaspora community severed from its roots, resettled in a strange place and often undergoing the slow but inexorable loss of its language and distinctive ways.

What happens when we fail to listen, or forget the wisdom of the ancestors? No institution, however venerable, is immune to the consequences of forgetting its ideals or ignoring the voices of its critics. Peter the Venerable was abbot of Cluny at its zenith; six centuries later, the monastery and its great church were plundered and its library burned. At one time Cluny had represented a great reform of Benedictine life. At its end, it represented everything the poor had come to hate about the concentration of wealth and power in the church and the aristocracy.

And yet, Benedictines are still here. As the motto of



the bombed and rebuilt abbey of Monte Cassino proclaims, *Succisa virescit*: “Cut it back, and it flourishes.” Humbled by the Reformation, the French Revolution and its aftermath, we had to rethink what it means to be monks in the modern world. We are still working on that.

What is true of my small part of the human community is also true of nations when they forget to listen, or simply give up trying. Our fragile planet has never been so threatened, nor the human beings who inhabit it so divided. The terrain for rational discourse has shrunk to a narrow strip between camps defined and limited by their political views, religious beliefs, race or ethnic identity, beset by anxiety that easily becomes fear and then violence. In such times as these, we must dig deeply into our respective stores of wisdom and offer whatever we find for the sake of mutual understanding, the only possible basis for reconciliation and for the resolve to move forward for the common good.

## Our Common Enemy

We are today facing a new temptation to ostracize and demean, this time because of the sincerely held religious beliefs of our Muslim sisters and brothers. This is not simply a divisive geopolitical issue but an urgent local problem, even in my adopted state of Minnesota with its immigrant Somali and other Muslim communities. As medieval Christian scholars of Arabic manuscripts came to understand, their enemy was not Islam, however deep their theological differences. The common enemy was—and remains—the fanaticism and ignorance that make understanding impossible.

My roots in an ancient monastic tradition give me a certain perspective, and dare I say, a certain confidence and hope when considering the work that lies before us. I recall the story told long ago by a young African man, confused and emotionally tormented, who heard the voice of a child chanting, *Tolle, lege; tolle, lege*. “Pick it up and read it. Pick it up and read it.” He picked up the book at his side, and he read it, as if for the first time. His name was Augustine, and in time he would become the finest writer of Western Christianity. But first he had to pick up the book—of course it was a manuscript—and read. May we do the same.

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Columba Stewart, O.S.B., is an American Benedictine monk, a scholar and the executive director of the Hill Museum & Manuscript Library in Collegeville, Minn. This essay is adapted from his Jefferson Lecture in the Humanities, sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities, given at Warner Theatre in Washington, D.C., on Oct. 7, 2019.

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# *My son was diagnosed with Down syndrome at birth*

Not knowing earlier was a blessing

By Monica Hembd

My son has Down syndrome. Let me say it again: My son has Down syndrome. A year ago, I would not have said those words aloud, though they are true. It was just too difficult. A year ago I dared anyone who looked at our family to ask me about or hint to me that they knew my infant son, Dylan, had Down syndrome. I did not want to talk about it. It was hard enough to hear his diagnosis spoken aloud to me for the first time, 18 months ago, on the day he was born.

We did not undergo the prenatal testing that can identify the condition when I was pregnant with Dylan. We knew that the results would not change anything, and our doctor was fine with our decision.

Dylan was born by C-section. My husband recognized he had Down syndrome as soon as his head came out. The doctor warned me they thought Dylan had Down syndrome before they brought him around for us to see up close. But it took me a while



to believe it. All I saw was a blue baby crying. I did not see the facial characteristics that are present with Down syndrome. Then I thought to myself: *That's not my baby. My baby doesn't have Down syndrome. I didn't order a child with Down syndrome. I ordered a baby that had no special needs.* When they brought him over for us to see up close, I did not want to touch him; it felt like he could not be mine, he could not be the perfect child I'd imagined. And then the doctors whisked him away.

My husband followed our son to the neonatal intensive care unit, where he would undergo further tests. I felt numb waiting for him to return. My son was almost eight hours old before I was able to hold him for the first time. I felt horrible that he had an IV in and had laid by himself in his isolet for that long, and his welcome into the world was an echocardiogram to make sure his heart was O.K. Between 40 and 60 percent of people with Down syndrome have congenital heart defects. We were lucky; Dylan's biggest worry was that the holes in his heart that were supposed to close at birth were not closed but were small enough that all he needed was supervision and oxygen.

Holding him for the first time was all it took for me to realize he was perfect. As I looked at my son, I knew he was mine and that the doctor was right: Dylan did have Down syndrome. I reached out and touched him and said hello, finally, because I realized his condition was not his fault. He did not ask to have Down syndrome or to deal with all the challenges that came along with it. This was my son, the one who I prayed and begged God for, for so many years. I was the one who wanted him.

For the first of many times, I cried. I cried because my prayers had been answered. I cried because it was not fair that my son had to deal with all the physical and cognitive issues that can come with Down syndrome. I cried because my husband and I had to tell our family that our perfect baby was going to have struggles. I cried because I worried I had done something wrong to cause this and it was my fault. I cried because how dare God do this to my son.

Several things helped me initially. First, I had read a book written by a mom of a child with cerebral palsy. The author helped me to understand that parents have a dream of how our children will be and what they will do long before we meet them. But when a child is born with a developmental delay, that dream as we knew it is gone. You have to grieve that loss of a dream and grieve on behalf of your child, who does not deserve to struggle but most likely will. But in that respect, they are no different from the rest of us.

Second, my husband and I agreed that we would not blame ourselves. Our faith in God helped us to understand the millions of small events that had happened to bring our son into our life

and that Dylan was our child for a reason. He was a gift for us, something that God felt we needed in our lives.

Third, as a physical therapist, I knew that our son's early years might be rough but that he likely would walk and get around on his own eventually. He would likely be able to talk and learn to do basic daily tasks. This was a consolation to me in the early months as he worked hard to achieve the developmental milestones that come with growing and learning.

Still, it was very hard to tell friends and family that our son had Down syndrome. Initially, I was ashamed. Would my family accept my son? One family member asked us, "What do you do about it?" But there is nothing to do about it. Down syndrome just is, and you deal with whatever comes your way.

I feared my husband's family would blame me. I feared we would be the talk of our small town. I feared no one would want to get to know me or my son because he might act differently from everyone else. I did not want anyone to come and talk to me about it. One of the main organizers of a local support group came to talk to us before we left the hospital, and it was all I could do not to scream at her to go away.

These days I can talk about it more easily. Recognizing what Dylan *can* do has also helped make it easier to talk about. He is slowly meeting his milestones. Our speech therapist tells us he is quite verbal for his age and in general. We are thrilled that he is babbling and starting to say words, and we are eager to see him walk.

Since Dylan is our first child (we now have a second child), he is our normal. And he is more alike than different from other kids. All kids have struggles; his just may take longer to overcome them. All kids get sick; he just may be sick more often or end up in the hospital a few times. Everyone has to learn how to live and function in the world; Dylan may just need a little more help. Most people graduate from high school. We hope Dylan will, too, though he may have a slightly different curriculum or diploma. I may have grieved the initial loss of my dreams of and for Dylan and know that as time goes on, that grieving will continue. Having to modify classwork, not being able to keep up physically in sports, high school prom and graduation are just a few of the possible challenges the future holds.

We are very lucky that Dylan is healthy and thriving. And he has such an amazing smile that, no matter what, brightens your day and makes you stop in your tracks and smile or laugh. That right there is enough. What it all comes down to for my husband and me is this: We have our baby boy. God gave him to us for a reason, and we are going to do our best to honor that gift.

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Monica Hembd is a proud mom and advocate of two children and a grateful wife who lives in rural Kansas.



## *A Law ‘Most Stupid and Insincere’*

*A look back at America’s coverage of Prohibition*

By James T. Keane

By the time the 18th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution went into effect in January 1920, prohibiting the manufacture, transport or sale of alcoholic beverages throughout the United States, 33 state legislatures out of 48 had taken it upon themselves to enact their own laws banning alcohol. Temperance societies and the Anti-Saloon League enjoyed significant influence in political institutions across the nation. While Prohibition’s popularity would wane by the end of the decade because of its unintended

consequences—greater lawlessness, violence and widespread bootlegging—at the time of its ratification and implementation, it enjoyed a fair amount of popular support.

Except in the pages of **America**.

In the state of Virginia, wrote the editors (all Jesuit priests and brothers at the time) in an April 1919 editorial, “a small army of detectives and ‘stool pigeons’” existed whose enforcement of that state’s Prohibition ordinance constituted “a menace to the peace and welfare of the com-

munity, immeasurably greater than the disorderly conduct of a mob of drunkards.”

The editors were just getting started. A paragraph later, they added:

If the citizens of Virginia, or of any other State, put the machinery of government into the hands of fanatics, who care nothing either for good government or for religion, provided they continue to draw a munificent



The end of a liquor raid, Oct. 14, 1922. From those early days before the 18th Amendment was passed until the day it was repealed in 1933, the editors of *America* kept up a steady drumbeat against Prohibition.

more frequently criticized the Volstead Act, the U.S. law passed to enforce the 18th Amendment. (Many an American Catholic knew it was a fool's errand in those years to criticize the Constitution itself.) Often the argument was presented as a case of states' rights against an overreaching federal government. Doctors, the editors also warned, would be unable to take advantage of alcohol's positive medicinal effects for their patients. Even U.S. passenger liners and shipping companies would fail, the editors suggested, "if they have to compete with foreign vessels that dispense liquor to passengers."

### A Plot Against Catholics?

A more novel accusation appeared in an editorial published in August 1919, "Federal Prohibition and the Mass," suggesting a certain anti-Catholic bias in the technical language used to enforce Prohibition. Would the government try to ban the use of sacramental wine? Such "wearisome and difficult technicalities may satisfy some of our Prohibitionist brethren of the milder variety," wrote the editors. "To others, however, they seem to mark the beginning of the era in which the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass can be made to depend on the favor of an internal revenue officer." If it were to come down to "a choice between Prohibition and the Mass," they warned, "it is not the Mass that will be protected."

The magazine returned to the

salary in the propagation of Mohammedan tenets, these same good citizens have only themselves to blame.

A month later, they editorialized that Prohibition should be enforced equally against "the barons of wealth" as it would be against "the street-cleaner," noting that "[t]he rich are 'stocking up,' and will suffer no want; but after his day of exhausting labor, the poor man may not have so much as a single glass of harmless,

necessary beer." And had the U.S. Senate vote on the 18th Amendment been taken by secret ballot, the editors argued later that year, it would have met with certain defeat—as some of the same senators who argued most vociferously in favor of Prohibition were noted partakers of liquor.

From those early days before the 18th Amendment was passed until the day it was repealed in 1933, the editors and more than a few contributors kept up a steady drumbeat against Prohibition, though they

Library of Congress/Wikimedia Commons

## On Dec. 5, 1933, Prohibition officially ended. ‘For this relief, we thank God,’ wrote America’s editors. ●●

theme two years later:

The Eighteenth Amendment has already destroyed a right reserved under the Constitution to the respective States. It has destroyed the right of the physician to prescribe what he deems best for his patient. In many parts of the country it has destroyed the right guaranteed by the Fourth Amendment. The next extension will be to destroy the Mass.

In 1925, the editors denounced the Anti-Saloon League and accused it of openly plotting against Catholics, sarcastically calling them “the good people who live in dread of the day when the Holy Father will order all Catholic Americans to capture the White House or the Washington Monument, or, if nothing better offers, even Congress.” The next year, they approvingly quoted Cardinal William Henry O’Connell, the archbishop of Boston: “Compulsory universal prohibition is a different thing, for compulsory prohibition, in general, is flatly opposed to Holy Scripture and Catholic tradition.”

The editors added: “We are not troubled by the accusation that we head the list of the brewers’ beneficiaries. The sole interest of this Review is to assert Catholic and constitutional principles, in the hope that peace and good order may be secured through the practice of temperance in all things.”

### Corruption and Hypocrisy

Another frequent complaint in the pages of *America* was that Prohibition was unevenly enforced, with the poor and the immigrant suffering most while the rich were drinking champagne in the comfort of their homes. Furthermore, driving liquor production and consumption underground was corrupting those “who never drank before, especially women” and young men who “trace the bootlegger to his lair.” Norway’s similar Prohibition laws had created, the editors noted, a country awash in illegal booze: “Even women, it is said, are acquiring a taste for strong drink.”

After passage of the 18th Amendment, what had at first been short editorial asides against Prohibition’s apparent promotion of illegal behavior grew into far-ranging broadsides against the legislation’s scope and effect. Calling Prohibition “the most stupid and most insincere of all our laws” in 1922, the editors listed its consequences:

[W]idespread and absolute disrespect for the principle of authority, an army of desperate bootleggers who are growing rich through lawlessness, hosts of half-hearted Prohibition agents, around whom run rivers of whisky that arise from inexhaustible fountains and flow into the houses and clubs of the rich man, an enormous increase of drunkenness and deaths from alcoholism, a great rise in the tax-rate, international complications, and many other more or less serious detriments.

In 1930, the editors declared that the Volstead Act “has transferred the

saloon to the family kitchen” and that “the shelves, on which mother used to range the family supply of jams, jellies and catsups, are now occupied by bottles and jugs containing noisome mixtures concocted by father.”

### Money Talks

By the end of the decade, the editors had a new target: the vast sums spent on enforcement of the Volstead Act. It was estimated the federal government would spend \$50 million to enforce Prohibition in 1929 alone. Further, the editors noted, vast tax revenues had been lost. “In the last five years before Prohibition the legitimate trade in alcoholic beverages netted the Government more than a billion dollars,” they wrote. “Since the advent of Prohibition, the money which went to the Government, goes to the bootlegger.” In 1932, the editors estimated that over the previous 12 years, the federal government had spent more than \$700 million on Prohibition enforcement—and was running a massive deficit for several of those years as a result of the Great Depression.

It became clear in the early 1930s that Prohibition was increasingly unpopular across the nation. Colleges and universities, once fertile breeding grounds for temperance and total-abstinence advocates, were now populated with students who regarded Prohibition as something of a joke. More significantly, the coalition of religious organizations, temperance societies and social groups like the Anti-Saloon League that had led the anti-alcohol crusade in the United States had lost much of its influence with Congress. No longer could it “whistle its cringing Congressman to heel, and feel assured that he will respond, every man of them with a dry

vote in his hand, if perhaps, a bottle of whiskey in his pocket,” the editors wrote in September 1930.

President Herbert Hoover, who had once called Prohibition a “great social and economic experiment, noble in motive and far-reaching in purpose,” admitted during his re-election campaign in 1932 that it had proved such a failure that “I cannot consent to a continuation of this regime.”

### The Relief of Repeal

It became clear in late 1933 that enough states would vote for the repeal of the 18th Amendment through the ratification of the 21st Amendment (though prohibition was still allowed at state and local levels), bringing Prohibition to an end. *America*'s editors celebrated its repeal, calling Prohibition a “disastrous attack upon public and private peace and sobriety” and suggested that “many a Congressman had to be awakened in time to vote for a new dry-bill with a whiskey breath.”

On Dec. 5, 1933, Prohibition officially ended. “For this relief, we thank God,” wrote the editors. What lessons were learned?

We have learned the folly, please God, of vesting the Federal Government with duties which under this form of government belong to the respective States. We have learned that it is a crime against civilization to substitute violence for the benign influence of religion.

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James T. Keane is a senior editor at *America*  
Twitter: @Jamestkeane.

## The Poisoned Loaf

By Patrick Cunningham

A crow, legend tells us,  
took the poisoned loaf  
the jealous subdeacon  
had sent to Benedict  
and flew it far from  
the mouths of those  
too hungry to question  
so sudden a gift.

Pinched between its beak,  
the holy cards imagine,  
a Dark Age dinner roll,  
a bitter bun marked with  
an X and not a cross.

I wonder if that's right.

Surely, it was bigger  
and cruder, a heavy  
boule hauled, ash-bottomed,  
from the stove's far back.

Surely, the crow struggled,  
thrust back into inelegance,  
wings against the draft.  
The loaf, talon-clutched,  
unsteady in its rising,  
an ill omen over Perugia,

Another of our sins aloft  
in that uneasy suspension:  
forgiven, dispatched, released  
but not yet departed.

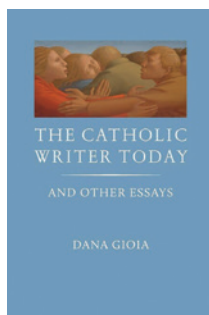
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Patrick Cunningham is a film director  
in Los Angeles, Calif. His debut feature,  
“Anyone Home?” opened in the summer  
of 2019.

## Dana Gioia requests your attention

By Liam Callanan

CNS photo/courtesy Star Black



### The Catholic Writer Today and Other Essays

By Dana Gioia  
Wiseblood Books  
220p \$18

Few writers craft arguments so forceful and sweeping that they not only re-energize but utterly reframe the debate; even fewer publish such an argument not once but twice in a single career; and yet fewer do so and somehow find time along the way to rescue and revivify two American icons—namely, the National Endowment for the Arts and Jell-O brand gelatin.

Actually, there is only one person who has done that, and his name is Dana Gioia. Poet, critic, professor, advocate and, yes, for a memorable stretch, the General Foods marketing executive tasked with stemming

Jell-O's decline, Gioia has lived an extraordinary life. Author of five poetry collections, three opera libretti and numerous translations, he has now published his fourth book of criticism, *The Catholic Writer Today and Other Essays*. It is a remarkable book.

Gioia's father was Italian-American, and his mother was a "working-class Mexican American woman born in poverty." She loved poetry, memorized favorites and shared this gift with her son. Lest any of this sound unusual, Gioia reminds the interviewer that "[d]espite what the professors would have us believe, average Americans once loved poetry."

By 1991, though, in Gioia's estimation, that love had long faded. That was the year that Gioia published his second poetry collection, *The Gods of Winter*; and the year The Atlantic published "Can Poetry Matter?" In that provocative essay, Gioia called for getting poetry out into the community, for integrating performances with other arts and for not ignoring

the popular, or as he more memorably put it: "It is time to experiment, time to leave the well-ordered but stuffy classroom, time to restore a vulgar vitality to poetry and unleash the energy now trapped in the subculture. There is nothing to lose."

Nearly 30 years on, that essay is still remembered—and poetry is, if not ascendant, arguably more central to American life and letters than it has been for decades. To be clear, that is not all Gioia's doing, but few writers can claim to have had as direct and broad an impact, financially and otherwise, on American arts as Gioia has had. Serving as the chair of the National Endowment for the Arts for six years under President George W. Bush, Gioia was called the "man who saved the NEA" from its years-long battle against defunding.

When Gioia stepped down, he hinted at his future plans, telling The Washington Post in 2008, "There's a role for the poet and public intellectual" in society.

But by 2012, those plans had taken a turn. Speaking to an interviewer from *Image* in an interview collected here, Gioia noted, “Now that I am a private citizen again, I can speak from a personal point of view”; and he did, bluntly. The next year, Gioia published in *First Things* the fiery title essay of this book. He minces no words:

Stated simply, the paradox is that, although Roman Catholicism constitutes the largest religious and cultural group in the United States, Catholicism currently enjoys almost no positive presence in the American fine arts—not in literature, music, sculpture, or painting. This situation not only represents a demographic paradox. It also marks a major historical change—an impoverishment, indeed even a disfigurement—for Catholicism, which has for two millennia played a hugely formative and inspirational role in the arts.

This book should come with a seatbelt. Not because the ride ahead is bumpy, but because the velocity of its thinking is so great and the range of references so vast. There are beautiful, searching essays on Donne, Hopkins and lesser-known poets like Dunstan Thompson, William Everson (a.k.a. Brother Antoninus) and Elizabeth Jennings. There is an authoritative journey through Paul’s Epistle to the Philippians. Dozens of other writers, artists and musicians glimmer in these pages, too, ranging

from George Tooker to Dave Brubeck to Morten Lauridsen.

Gioia does not demand or even expect agreement with all his assessments. (And I didn’t always agree, as when, say, he deplores “folksy anthems composed by amateur Jesuit musicians. If hell has a hymnal, these tunes will fill its opening pages.” Well, here I am, Lord.) But he does command attention. Six years later, “*The Catholic Writer Today*” reads with as much energy as it did upon its original publication, if not more, and it throws down a gauntlet every bit as challenging as “*Can Poetry Matter?*”, though the audience may be smaller.

Indeed, that is part of his central lament—the ranks of nationally known Catholic writers are smaller than in the glory days, which Gioia charts as lasting from roughly 1945 to 1965. During this stretch, “Catholic novelists and poets received 11 Pulitzer Prizes and 5 National Book Awards.” Gioia succinctly defines the era this way:

First, many important writers publicly identified themselves as faithful Catholics. Second, the cultural establishment accepted Catholicism as a possible and permissible artistic identity. Third, there was a dynamic and vital Catholic literary and intellectual tradition visibly at work in the culture. Fourth and finally, there was a critical and academic milieu that actively read, discussed, and supported the best Catholic writing.

“Today,” he concludes, “not one of those four observations remains true.” Though “today” refers to 2013, when the essay was first published, the line goes unrevised in the 2019 book, so it is fair to assume that Gioia still believes this. But is it still true?

Yes—but also, increasingly, no. And this is due, in part, to Gioia himself, who has been working diligently to undermine his own assertion. He has moved well past lamenting the plight of the Catholic writer today to working adamantly to foster the careers of the Catholic writers—and readers—of tomorrow.

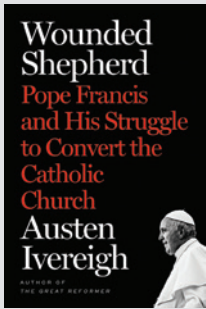
Can poetry matter? Yes. Can the Catholic writer today matter? Of course. But what would it take for Catholic writers today to matter even more, and to whom? Why aren’t more voices of the diverse new generations of writers—many of them cradle Catholics—willing to claim their Catholic identities?

The answers are not simple, and neither is Gioia’s argument. But one part of it is simple, and it emerged during a general session at a recent conference on the Catholic imagination, when Gioia mentioned that whenever he does a reading now, whatever the setting, he is always sure to do one thing: He tells the audience he is Catholic.

That matters.

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Liam Callanan was the winner of the 2017 George W. Hunt, S.J., Prize, co-sponsored by America Media and the St. Thomas More Chapel & Center at Yale University. His novel *Paris* by the Book was published in 2018.



**Wounded Shepherd**  
By Austen Ivereigh  
Henry Holt and Co.  
416p \$30

### Pope Francis the spiritual director

It is almost seven years into Pope Francis' papacy. After all the hagiography and polemic, what more is there to say? Perhaps something beyond hagiography and polemic.

Austen Ivereigh attempts to provide such an account in *Wounded Shepherd*, which aims to move beyond the "great man" account of his first Francis biography, *The Great Reformer*. As Ivereigh notes, it does not good to cast Francis as "an anointed, otherworldly figure [who] rises up to defeat overwhelming challenges with superhuman prowess."

Ivereigh deploys a humbler image of Francis throughout *Wounded Shepherd*. A primary key to that image is to understand Francis as a spiritual director who facilitates the church's cooperation with the Holy Spirit. Many of Pope Francis' supporters act as though his papacy were a singular moment to remake the church, just as many of his critics act as though his papacy were a singular moment to undo the church. Neither account is accurate, according to Ivereigh.

Instead, Francis understands his role as a mediator of "the God of mercy." This is a priority for Francis that Ivereigh sees strengthened by his participation in the meeting of Latin American bishops in Apareci-

da, Brazil, in 2007, which called for a "humble, discerning disposition" to "put Christ and the poor at the center" of the church.

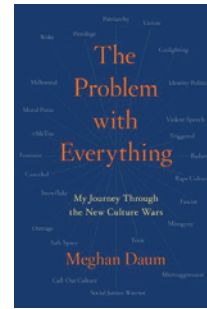
Ivereigh also speaks to Francis' mistakes, which he tends to present as delayed conversions. In Chapter 5, Ivereigh details Francis' trip to Chile in 2018 and the controversy surrounding the clerical sexual abuse crisis there. The events were unhappy, particularly Francis' defense of Bishop Juan Barros, but ultimately led Francis to realize that he had himself been the victim of a cover-up about the magnitude of the clerical sex abuse problem in Chile.

Through such episodes, Ivereigh characterizes Francis as someone who trusts experience over ideas but is willing to have his mind changed.

Some do not see such humility in Ivereigh's treatment of Francis' critics. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops issued a correction of Ivereigh's account of the U.S.C.C.B.'s fall meeting in 2018 as "false and misleading." Others have noted that Ivereigh dismisses many of Francis' critics as "rigorists," a word with 11 entries in the index.

Ivereigh believes deeply in the goodness and necessity of this papacy and is therefore not interested in "standing in judgment" over the pope. That is an understandable position, but it means that the book is best for those who are already sympathetic to Francis. It will not change the minds of those who are not.

*Bill McCormick, S.J., is a contributing editor at America and a visiting assistant professor at Saint Louis University in the departments of political science and philosophy.*



**The Problem With Everything**  
My Journey Through the New Culture Wars  
By Meghan Daum  
Gallery Books  
225p \$27

### It's complicated

The novelist Zadie Smith claims a "right to be wrong," which she preserves by staying off social media. Online, critics of your half-formed thoughts are everywhere, and it is easy to succumb to their voices. A thinker who fears being wrong will lose her chance to be right.

In her new book, *The Problem With Everything*, the razor-sharp essayist and former Los Angeles Times columnist Meghan Daum confronts that fear. The book recounts how Daum came to feel alienated from a new generation of "extremely online" activists.

Daum writes that as the "woke" left ascended, "I began to see the ways in which my wariness toward what I saw as hollow indignation and performed outrage—my resistance to certain aspects of the resistance, if you will—was in many ways fundamentally generational." As a member of Gen X, she came of age with a set of values different from those of millennials: not fairness but toughness, not ideological certitude but nuance.

As a child, Daum watched gender-neutralized 1970s PBS programs and accompanied her mother to women's rights rallies. In her 20s, she brushed off street harassment as "life in the big city." Now, in her



40s, Daum watches with dismay as, in her view, a brash new feminism rewrites that past as “problematic.”

Daum dissects a familiar set of cultural issues: campus politics, the #MeToo movement and the self-styled rogue thinkers of the Intellectual Dark Web. She argues that things are more complicated than progressive influencers let on. She argues, for instance, that hatred of Education Secretary Betsy DeVos has blinded the left to the justice of her guidelines for adjudicating sexual assault allegations at universities.

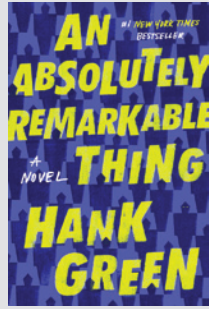
The left, in Daum’s view, needs “more empathy as a matter of course. We need to recognize that to deny people their complications and contradictions is to deny them their humanity.”

The book’s most affecting chapter tells how Daum’s divorce ended a long-running conversation about culture and politics in which she had total freedom of thought. Losing that intimacy led to despair. “If there’s anything I’ve learned in twenty-five years,” she writes, “it’s that the more honest you are about what you think, the more you have to sit in solitude with your own thoughts.”

It may be that we can safely risk being wrong only among people who love us. We rarely find them on Twitter. The more our intellectual and political lives take place there, instead of in face-to-face encounters in a spirit of trust, the worse the problem with everything will become.

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Jonathan Malesic is a writer living in Dallas. He is working on a book about burnout for University of California Press.



**An Absolutely Remarkable Thing**  
By Hank Green  
Dutton Books  
352p \$26

### Extremely online

If you are a living, breathing being with a phone glued to your hand 24/7 and access to a Facebook, Twitter or Instagram account, you have at some point wondered what it would be like to be Internet Famous. We have all been there. As a social media editor, I have *definitely* been there. But have you paused to consider what that actually means or how much of yourself you have to give up?

Good news: You don’t have to wonder anymore. Hank Green’s debut novel, *An Absolutely Remarkable Thing*, takes you on that journey—but with aliens.

The protagonist, April May, is a young 20-something who accidentally gets thrown into the world of internet stardom. One evening, after a grueling day at work as a graphic designer at a start-up in New York, April stumbles upon a sculpture on the corner of a Manhattan intersection. She almost dismisses it, a 10-foot-tall Transformer wearing samurai armor; but, as an artist, April decides to give the sculpture a second look. She summons her friend, Andy, to film a short (fake) interview with the sculpture, dubbed Carl. Andy uploads the video to YouTube as April enjoys the last restful night’s sleep of her life. When she wakes up, April and Andy discover

they are Internet Famous.

So begins a whirlwind adventure, full of television interviews, a meeting with a P.R. agency, personal assistants, hundreds of thousands of Youtube subscribers, online trolls, Freddie Mercury and more Carls than you can count. Their adventure only escalates when April and Andy realize their accidental encounter with the sculpture was actually a first encounter with an extraterrestrial species.

Throughout the novel, April grapples with what this accidental fame will mean for her future. Now that she’s in, is she in for the rest of her life? She worries “that one day, the most interesting and important thing about me would be a thing I did long ago.”

Green’s novel gives a firsthand account of what it is like when a person becomes a brand, when one’s every thought, word and move is scripted, scheduled and scrutinized, ready to be devoured by an audience always demanding more.

“You can only do so much pretending before you become the thing you’re pretending,” April says early in the novel. People who read this novel will see a piece of themselves reflected in it. We can either run away from this truth or face it head on and leave with the realization that we are worth so much more than the best and worst days of our lives. And that is the truly remarkable thing.

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Vivian Cabrera, *assistant editor*.  
Twitter: @iCabrera05.



## Mixtapes and the modern musical

By Rob Weinert-Kendt

"Tina" has a big, brassy sound befitting its star, center, a powerhouse named Adrienne Warren.

The sound of the Broadway musical has changed irrevocably in the half century since the showtunes of Rodgers and Hammerstein, and heirs like Sondheim or Kander and Ebb ruled the stage. But the sound is not all that has changed: Along with its embrace of rock, pop and hip-hop, the substance and shape of the American musical have been transformed. While the traditional narrative musical is not extinct—"Hamilton," for instance, is more a culmination than a reinvention of the form—many shows that make it to Broadway these days are harder to classify. From "jukebox" musicals cashing in on yesterday's hits to concept shows built around larger-than-life personalities or mythic narratives, what we mean when we say "musical" now often demands a

further definition.

The fall season has given us three wildly different case studies in Broadway's pop/rock hybrids, with all three representing new twists on longstanding trends. "American Utopia" is a glorified, and glorious, concert by David Byrne, the former frontman of the Talking Heads; "Tina: The Tina Turner Musical" combines the singer's biography with a flashy greatest-hits compilation; and "Jagged Little Pill" grafts a contemporary story onto Alanis Morissette's 1995 blockbuster album. All three shows are likely hits and awards magnets, though whether they are form-defining watersheds remains to be seen (and heard).

Byrne has dipped his toes into theater before, most notably with his immersive Imelda Marcos musical

"Here Lies Love," a hit Off-Broadway. But "American Utopia" makes no pretense of narrative; instead it is a beautifully curated sampler of songs from both his Talking Heads and solo careers, with an emphasis on his more big-hearted, outward-looking material, as opposed to his more clipped, paranoid rants—more "This Must Be the Place" than "Psycho Killer."

Appearing in a gray suit and bare feet, with an 11-member band similarly attired and roving the stage like a futuristic marching band, Byrne peppers the evening with slyly searching commentary about science, humanity and music, coming off a bit like Andy Warhol doing a TED talk as Mister Rogers. A spry 67, Byrne is in excellent voice, whether stretching it over big beats and sinuous guitars or



# Who Is Jesus?

Readings: Is 42:1-4, 6-7; Ps 29; Acts 10:34-38; Mt 3:13-17

Who is Jesus? On this celebration of Jesus' baptism, the Gospel of Matthew provides a clear answer: Jesus is the Son of God.

Matthew's account of Jesus' baptism includes details not found in the other Gospels. In Mark, which Matthew used as source material, when Jesus is baptized, a voice from heaven speaks directly to Jesus: "You are my beloved Son" (Mk 1:11). Luke's account also retains the second person (Lk 3:22). John's version is different, describing Jesus' baptism from John the Baptist's perspective (Jn 1:29-34). Matthew depicts a voice speaking about Jesus: "This is my beloved Son" (Mt 3:17). This subtle difference draws attention to the audience who witnessed Jesus' baptism and informs them of Jesus' identity. Matthew establishes Jesus and the significance of his forthcoming public ministry.

Matthew also extends Mark's account by including dialogue between Jesus and John over whether Jesus should submit to baptism. According to Matthew, John was concerned that he was unworthy to baptize Jesus. Nonetheless, Jesus wants to be baptized "to fulfill all righteousness" (Mt 3:15). How should those who are baptized live in order to be righteous with Christ? The first and second readings offer guidance: Establish and inspire justice, and be open to all people.

The first reading is set during the Babylonian exile when the people of Judah were experiencing invasion, destruction and deportation. Isaiah implores them to be strong and bring forth justice like a smoldering wick. An unquenchable, burning flame symbolizes the endurance that is needed to "establish justice on the earth" (Is 42:3). Likewise, Isaiah calls on the exiles to "be a light for the nations" (Is 42:6). We might, with good reason, be uncomfortable with placing the responsibility for inspiring change on those who are already victims of oppression. But those who suffer are often the greatest spokespersons and most compelling advocates. Isaiah recognizes how their example of endurance and fidelity empowers all of us to work tirelessly to achieve a just society, even when we might want to give up.

*'God shows no partiality. Whoever fears him and acts uprightly is acceptable to him.'* (Acts 10:34-35)

## PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

How can Jesus' baptism inspire me to live a just life?

Do I hold myself and others accountable for establishing a just society?

When I make mistakes, do I acknowledge them and attempt to improve myself?

In the reading from Acts, Luke shows Peter developing a new perspective on Gentiles. Earlier in the narrative, Peter expressed reluctance about associating with non-Jews. After receiving a vision from heaven, Peter recognizes the errors in his ideas, and he becomes more open-minded (Acts 10:28-29). In turn, Peter embraces a meeting with Cornelius, a Gentile and a Roman centurion, because of how he lives, not because of who he is. Cornelius is affirmed as a person who respects God and lives an upright life, and Peter declares Christ as the Lord of all people (Acts 10:36). As the narrative continues, the Holy Spirit descends on the Gentiles, who are then baptized in the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 10:44-48).

Jesus' baptism reminds us of the implications of our own baptism in Christ, which requires us to live as Christ did. We should advocate for justice; and, like Peter, we should be open to critical self-reflection and improvement.

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# Call to Action

Readings: Is 49:3, 5-6; Ps 40; 1 Cor 1:1-3; Jn 1:29-34

This past week, we began the period of Ordinary Time, the counted (i.e., ordinal) weeks in the liturgical calendar. Today's readings inspire us to think about our calling from God.

As on the feast of the Baptism of Jesus last week, the first reading is one of the Servant Songs in the Book of Isaiah. In the context of the Babylonian exile, the Servant Songs highlight the trauma of suffering and the restoration that is provided by the Lord. Notably, Isaiah asserts that this sufferer was formed "from the womb" to be a servant of the Lord (Is 49:5). This prenatal calling has important parallels to the prophet Jeremiah and the apostle Paul, who both assert that they were commissioned from within their mothers' wombs (Jer 1:5, Gal 1:15). These callings remind us of God's intimate connection to our conception, formation and purpose.

In the second reading, we see how that call takes shape in Paul's life. Paul's letter addresses the church of God at Corinth, people sanctified in Christ Jesus who are called to be holy (1 Cor 1:2). In the salutation, Paul establishes his role as an apostle of Christ. He is commissioned to visit and

correspond with communities, support their development, clarify theology and affirm the significance of belief in the resurrection. Moreover, Paul calls on these communities to live lives that will strengthen their relationships with God and one another, lives that are sanctified and holy.

The Gospel reading provides a vivid example of a prophetic call in action. John the Baptist offers a public testimony about who Jesus is: the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (Jn 1:29). The theme of Jesus as a sacrificial, Passover lamb is prominent in the Gospel of John (1:36, 19:14, 36). This theological assertion explains that Christ's death on the cross is to redeem humanity. By proclaiming Christ as "Lamb of God," John makes a Christological claim about the significance of Jesus and his death. This powerful imagery influences later Christian prayers, including the "Lamb of God" prayer said before Communion is distributed at Mass. In today's Gospel, John the Baptist offers a public witness, proclaiming Jesus' death for the redemption of the world.

Today's readings provoke us to self-reflection and action. We should recognize God's intimate connection to our origins and live thoughtfully in a way that honors our human dignity. We can draw inspiration from Paul, who worked to spread the Gospel and encouraged people to embrace its message and shape their lives accordingly. We should also be inspired by John the Baptist, who publicly testified on behalf of Christ. As we proceed through this new year, we should be mindful of who we are called to be and work to enrich our lives and the lives of others.

*'Now I have seen and testified that he is the Son of God.'* (Jn 1:34)



## PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

What can I do to live a life that is sanctified and holy?

Are my public actions a good reflection of who I am called to be?

What steps can I take to grow spiritually during Ordinary Time?

Jaime L. Waters teaches Scripture at DePaul University in Chicago. She is an associate professor of Catholic studies.

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# Reflections for My Girls

*Witnessing chaos and cruelty at the border*

By Kerry Kennedy



To Cara, Mariah and Michaela: I have spent recent days holding tight to thoughts of you three, my heart breaking as I meet families fractured and in turmoil, yet clinging to the hope of the American dream.

I am about to fly home from Tijuana after meeting with asylum seekers and their lawyers at the U.S.-Mexico border. The exhaustion, the filth and the fear are all palpable as I walk through the makeshift shelters for migrants. Parents and children know their lives are at stake, and families are still being separated in other ways, despite the Trump administration's formal end to the "zero tolerance" policy of taking children away from all parents who enter the country without documentation. And there is no guarantee of family reunification, a grim reality confirmed by a recent Department of Homeland Security report that found the Trump administration had "no way to link" separated children with their parents.

Our immigration system is cruel and capricious, a contrast to Pope Francis' call to "tear down walls and build bridges." I heard so many heart-wrenching stories, either from those who experienced them or from their lawyers, on this trip organized by the social action agency Revolve Impact. For example: A little boy from Central America watched both his parents murdered, execution-style.

Immigration advocates told us that when his grandmother brought him over the border, U.S. authorities took the traumatized child away from his *abuela*, placing him in child protective services instead. His grandmother did not fit the Trump administration's definition of "family," so this separation was, in their minds, legal.

I heard about a transgender woman whose life had been threatened by an El Salvador gang and who had made the treacherous journey through Guatemala, across Mexico and up to the California border. She was ecstatic the day she finally crossed into the United States and filed for asylum. But an immigration officer denied her claim and deported her to San Salvador, where, within hours of arrival, she was murdered by the gang.

Yet in the midst of all this suffering, there is also incredible heroism. Pro bono attorneys help reduce time in detention and monitor human rights abuses along the border, filing petitions and using bond funds to free mothers, fathers and children from cages. These men and women are engaging in strategic litigation to stop the use of "metering," which severely limits the number of asylum-seekers allowed to present their cases on any given day at certain ports of entry.

These attorneys are also holding ICE accountable for detention violations, including forced labor at

privately run detention centers with government contracts—where people who have broken no law are coerced into working a full day's labor for less than a dollar's wages. And they are enforcing the Americans With Disabilities Act, citing medical neglect and failure to provide the most rudimentary bathroom facilities for those who are wheelchair-bound.

The purported justification by the Trump administration for family separation and other punitive policies is to deter asylum seekers from coming to the United States in the first place. Yet deterrence fails. People are willing to endure the cruelty because there is no other option but to return home to certain death.

I realize that the United States cannot grant asylum to every person who seeks it, but this trip has deepened my conviction that we should treat each person with dignity and uphold our values as a nation of immigrants. I will not forget the faces I have seen here.

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*Kerry Kennedy is the president of Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights, a nonprofit human rights advocacy organization and the mother of three daughters.*



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St Edmund's College, a graduate College of the University of Cambridge comprising a community of nearly 1000 students, Fellows, senior members and staff, seeks to appoint a Dean from 1st October 2020 or as soon as possible thereafter. The Dean must be a priest of the Roman Catholic Church in good standing with their Ordinary. The Dean is responsible for the provision of regular worship in the College Chapel and for the pastoral care of all members of the College community. The Dean will be elected to a Fellowship on appointment. This is a full-time position attracting a salary of c £30,000 depending on experience, accommodation in College and other attractive benefits. Further particulars of the post and details about how to apply are available on the College website.

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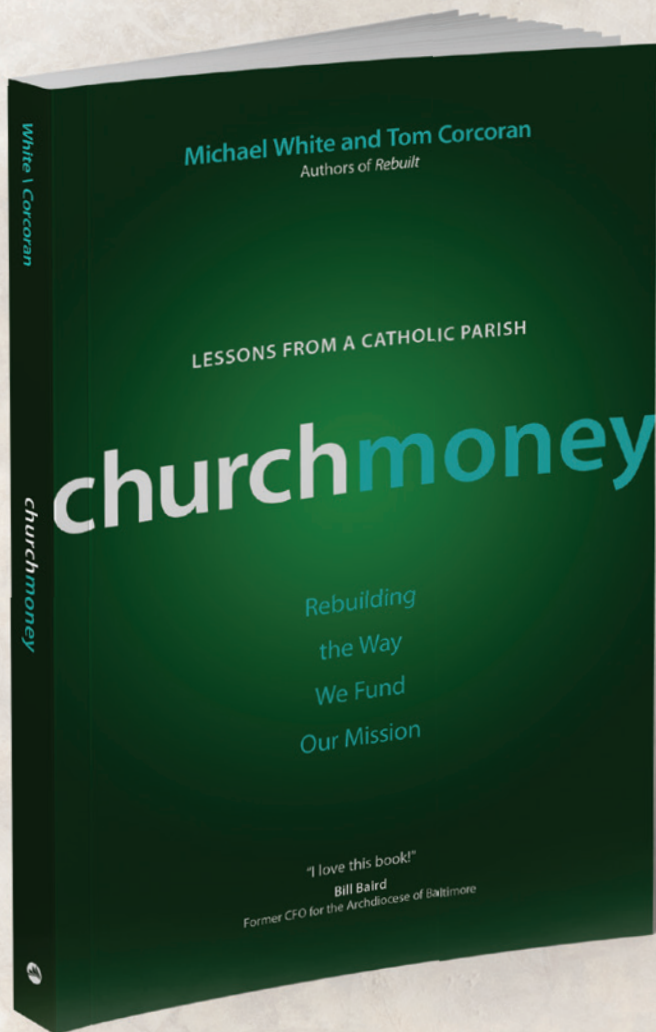
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