

America

2019 CPA MAGAZINE OF THE YEAR

OCTOBER 28, 2019

THE JESUIT OF FAITH AND CULTURE



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A New World

I arrived in Rome on Oct. 15 after a late-night flight from New York. By coincidence, I was crossing the Atlantic Ocean on Columbus Day and, appropriately enough, in a craft piloted by an Italian. The eight-hour flight gave me time to do some reading, including a half dozen op-eds from the previous 48 hours that all addressed the question of whether we should even have a Columbus Day, or whether the federal holiday should be called Indigenous Peoples Day instead.

I do not object to having an Indigenous Peoples Day, but I wonder whether it's necessary for it to take the place of Columbus Day. The underlying question is what exactly are we celebrating on Columbus Day? No doubt we are recognizing the date when Christopher Columbus first set foot in the Western Hemisphere. And no doubt this is not an event that we can all look back on, indigenous peoples especially, with undiluted pride or pleasure.

But it is just as true that we recognize on Columbus Day that which Columbus Day has meant at other times in the history of the United States; and there are aspects of that story that we all should be able to recognize as having some universal, contemporary importance.

For one thing, Columbus Day was instituted as a way of celebrating the contributions of Italian-Americans to the life of the United States. Italian-Americans, like their Irish-American counterparts, were viewed by the white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant establishment during most of the 19th century and early 20th century, as positively unwelcome, un-American and even subhuman.

In response to that pervasive ethnic prejudice, which also involved a virulent strain of anti-Catholicism, Columbus Day was born. Thus the principle that ethnic and religious prejudice should have no place in American life is a part of the legacy of Columbus Day too. Surely that is something we can all celebrate, while also allowing for the fact that not everything associated with the holiday and its history is worth celebrating.

But reaching consensus on a matter such as this is especially difficult in a polarized world. Polarization does not respect nuance. But without nuance, without some appreciation for the complexities of our history and the reality of the fallen world we live in, our otherwise good intentions can become a blunt instrument, more appropriate for brute confrontation than genuine encounter with each other.

To wit: A story in a recent edition of *The New York Post* looked at the “She Built NYC” project, an initiative led by the First Lady of New York City that “sets out to balance the male-female mix of statues of prominent New Yorkers.” This is a good idea. Our statues should better represent the great diversity and complexity of our history. The trick is to achieve that without some other unwarranted exclusion. That has proven difficult.

As *The Post* reported, “the initiative asked for the public’s input—and more than 1,800 suggestions poured in, with some 320 women nominated.” Who received the greatest number of votes? None other than St. Frances Xavier Cabrini, the Catholic sister popularly known as Mother Cabrini, who was “America’s first saint” and founded “67 organizations for the

needy in the late 1880s.”

But despite receiving the most votes, Mother Cabrini didn’t make the final cut. I have no real objections to the people who did, which include the jazz legend Billie Holiday and Shirley Chisholm, the nation’s first black congresswoman. They clearly deserve such an honor. But why not Mother Cabrini?

Apparently, I’m not the only one who asked that. New York’s governor, Andrew Cuomo, was so troubled by the exclusion of Mother Cabrini, in fact, that on Columbus Day, he announced that New York State would pay for the statue. That’s where things stand on Oct. 15.

Michele Bogart, an art history professor at Stony Brook University, closely observed the work of the city commission and told *The Post* that its approach was ahistorical: “One hundred years from now,” she said, “who is to say our attitudes in the present day won’t be taken to task?”

Who’s to say indeed? In the meantime, I hope we can find a way to move past the polemics of both sides, so we can come to a richer and deeper understanding of our history, one that doesn’t require us to cast aside someone or a group of someones in order to make room for someone else. There’s plenty of room. It’s not a zero-sum game.

So can we keep Columbus Day and have an Indigenous Peoples Day as well? Why not both? And if Columbus still proves too controversial, why not at least hold on to the spirit of the day by replacing him with another prominent Italian-American?

I’d nominate Mother Cabrini.

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



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AP Photo / Ramon Espinosa

Pastor Jeremiah Saunders stands among the ruins of his church that was destroyed by Hurricane Dorian, in High Rock, Grand Bahama, Bahamas, Sept. 11.

Cover: The border fence that divides Mexico from the United States in Ciudad de Juarez, Mexico, July 28; Ellis Island in New York, undated. AP Photo/Christian Chavez; AP Photo/File

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Whom would you canonize?

In every episode of our podcast, “Jesuitical,” we conclude our interviews by asking all our guests this same question: “If you could canonize anyone, living or dead, Catholic or not, fictional or real, who would it be, and why?” After more than 100 episodes, we decided to ask our listeners the same question and invited them to send in their answers by email.

I think everyone can glean something from this exercise, even if (almost) none of us are in a position to formally elevate someone to sainthood. One listener, Nick Frega, wrote: “It was really such a great experience to talk about a friend’s holiness, which I had not anticipated until I did it.”

—Zac Davis, associate editor and co-host of “Jesuitical”

Jan Karski. A Catholic born in Poland in 1914, he worked for the Polish government in exile, and was among the first to report on the atrocities of the Warsaw ghetto and the expulsion of Jews from their homes to the Belzec death camp. Like other saints, Karski was a risk-taker, getting detained at a Soviet labor camp in 1939 and undergoing torture by the Gestapo without surrendering his cause. Karski recognized God in his fellow man, as he witnessed firsthand the injustice that was perpetrated on his Jewish neighbors.

Joe Egler

J.J. Stinson. J.J. passed away in 2012 in Switzerland while studying abroad. He had gone for a hike to reflect and pray during the Triduum, and was found with a Bible. J.J. was the embodiment of joy, meeting everyone with love and pushing them to recognize God’s grace within them. He engaged thoughtfully with theology and philosophy and was an excellent musician in spaces both inside and outside of the church. J.J.’s passing started me going to Mass now annually on All Saints or All Souls Day, because I have no doubt he is praying for us in heaven.

Megan Murray

Giovannino Guareschi, author of *The Little World of Don Camillo*. Anyone who reads these charming, simple stories about a rural Italian priest will feel enriched, have their faith deepened and laugh out loud. Most of us can probably identify with Don Camillo’s very human and flawed personality as he strives to obey his conscience, given voice in his conversations with a patient but frequently exasperated Jesus.

Gerry Bagnall

Fulvio Frediani, my father, was not a churchgoing man. He went to church three times in his life: when he was hatched, when he was hitched and when he was disposed. His faith was in his labor and his ability to draw from work the means to provide for his family. As when Christ carried the cross to the mount, my father carried sacks of cement and sand every day on his shoulders.

Paul Frediani

Deacon Peter Burns, parish life director at St. Timothy Catholic Church in Lutz, Fla. He is the most influential person in my own life as a minister, as my formal ministerial mentor. He made space for me to have my own wounds healed, so that I would not be ministering from a place of needing to be needed but rather a place of real self-giving love. I know he’s done this for many other people. In other words, not only is he fantastic at being Christ to others, but he’s also developed the potential of other people to be Christ to others.

Nick Frega

Fred Rogers. He dedicated his life to teaching children and their families to love their neighbors and each other. Through television, he reached children who might not have otherwise learned about compassion, patience and love. I would name him the patron saint of children and neighbors.

Jennifer Morris Mitchell

Glenda Castro [America Media’s receptionist], one of the kindest, most empathetic and big-hearted people I know.

Brandon Sanchez (former O’Hare fellow at America Media)

Some responses were also sent as audio recordings. A sample of those will be featured in the podcast feed for the “Jesuitical” podcast. Listen at americamag.org/jesuiticalshow.

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Policy Reversal Betrays the Kurds—and Hurts U.S. Credibility Abroad

It will be a crowded field when the West's greatest geopolitical betrayals are measured against one another, but surely President Trump's turnabout on the Kurdish people of northern Syria represents a standout. In a phone call on Oct. 6, the president abruptly reversed U.S. policy, against the counsel of both the Pentagon and the State Department, abandoning the Kurds—again—to the brutality of a more powerful neighbor.

Since 2015, the Syrian Democratic Forces—an alliance that includes Kurdish People's Protection Units, Free Syrian Army elements and Assyrian and other militias—had been the tip of the U.S. spear against ISIS extremism. The Kurds suffered thousands of battlefield losses during that fight but had been encouraged to believe that their sacrifice would earn them at least a seat at the table when the final resolution of the Syrian catastrophe is negotiated. Now both the S.D.F. and the United States will likely

be on the sidelines when Syria's President Assad, Iran, Russia and Turkey eventually get around to concluding the mind-numbing violence in Syria.

Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the Turkish president, justifies the offensive as a strike against potential terrorist elements he perceives within the S.D.F., even as his army and its allied Sunni militia rain actual terror down on border communities, including a number of Christian villages. This latest Turkish offensive will propel the same ethnic cleansing by forced relocation that followed the Afrin campaign in 2018, when as many as 300,000 people were displaced. Indeed, hundreds of Kurdish, Syriac Christian and Yazidi families are already choking roadways northward, attempting to escape the Turkish bombardment of border communities.

It is hard to overstate how strategically ruinous the president's volteface on the S.D.F. will likely prove to be. The small U.S. deployment not only protected S.D.F. gains; it ensured

that the United States remained a player in Syria and allowed U.S. strategists a continuing role in the containment of the ISIS malignancy. Turkey apparently offered the president nothing in return for his capricious abandonment of the nation's hard-won achievements in Syria. Now NATO has fractured as European leaders rush to condemn the Turkish attack, and thousands of captured ISIS militants are likely to escape into the wind as S.D.F. troops are forced to abandon detention duty for the frontline.

The Kurds will have no choice but to seek a rapprochement with Mr. Assad if they hope to survive the Turks, drawing Iranian and Russian influence deeper into the region. And President Trump has demonstrated before the world that the United States cannot be considered a trustworthy partner, whether that be on an arms agreement, a trade deal or the continuing struggle against terror and extremism.

Trump Cannot Ignore Impeachment Inquiry

On the afternoon of Oct. 8, the White House sent a letter to House Democrats describing the ongoing impeachment inquiry as “constitutionally invalid and a violation of due process.” This followed the Trump administration's decision to block Gordon D. Sondland, the ambassador to the European Union, from testifying before Congress earlier that day about his discussions with other U.S. diplomats regarding President Trump's attempts to pressure Ukraine to conduct investigations that would be to the president's political advantage.

The administration's full-court

press to stonewall the House's inquiry only underlines the necessity of hearings, evidence and testimony to establish a full accounting of the facts. The details of Mr. Trump's call with the president of Ukraine, overlapping in time with the delayed release of congressionally authorized military aid, raise concerns about a possible, deeply disturbing misuse of presidential power, which can only be resolved by a full investigation. While not enough facts are known and a decision on impeachment itself is premature, an inquiry is absolutely necessary.

The letter by the president's legal counsel contains no convincing ob-

jection to such an inquiry. The letter claims that an impeachment inquiry must be authorized by a formal vote, but this is neither constitutionally nor otherwise legally required for the House to hold hearings or subpoena witnesses. Since the administration has already frequently refused to cooperate with congressional oversight even about topics unconnected to any potentially impeachable matters and declined to commit to cooperating even if an inquiry is formally authorized, this sudden assertion of an imaginary constitutional requirement rings false.

Neither is there any requirement at

this early stage for the president to be able to see evidence in advance and cross-examine witnesses during a process that the Constitution entrusts to the “sole Power” of the House. House committee proceedings already allow both parties to make their concerns heard, and an impeachment inquiry is analogous to a grand jury proceeding, not a trial. If the House does not, during the full course of the inquiry, make sufficient allowance for the president to present a defense, then the proper remedy is for him to do so in the Senate trial that would follow a vote to impeach.

Instead, the letter accuses House Democrats of seeking to overturn the 2016 election and shockingly concludes that the president “cannot allow [the House’s] constitutionally illegitimate proceeding to distract him” and will therefore refuse to cooperate with the inquiry. In fact, such a manifestly absurd dismissal of a co-equal branch of government is itself an alarming overreach of executive power, which itself amounts to a rejection of the 2018 election that gave Democrats a majority in the House.

The apparent reasons that Democrats have not yet held a formal vote are underwhelming: the desire to spare vulnerable members a politically risky vote and the additional concern that Republicans would in turn demand subpoena power, which they could use to pursue the smokescreen allegations of misconduct on the part of the president’s opponents contained in the administration’s letter. Those risks are far outweighed by the benefits of embracing the House’s constitutional duty and requiring all its members to go on the record as to whether Mr. Trump’s apparent use of foreign policy for his personal political advantage and his disdain for the system of checks and balances warrants a House-sanctioned investigation and possible impeachment.

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Democrats careless with ‘religiously unaffiliated’

On Aug. 24, the Democratic National Committee passed a resolution recognizing the “value” of “religiously unaffiliated” Americans. Democrats should reach out to everyone, including those who are not religious, but the wording of this resolution does more than that. It is bad politics, and it is also nonsense on its own merits.

The resolution claims that the “religiously unaffiliated group represents the largest religious group within the Democratic Party.” This might advance the interests of the groups that wrote the resolution, like the Secular Coalition for America and the Freedom From Religion Foundation, but these groups do not represent all the religiously unaffiliated, many of whom believe in God and are anything but “secular.” The claim groups together atheists, agnostics and those who do not belong to a specific faith tradition—while splitting Catholics from Protestants; Hispanic Protestants from black Protestants from white Protestants; and Methodists from Presbyterians from Baptists.

The problem with lifting up the religiously unaffiliated for praise is that, by the very nature of the category, the only thing you are praising is that they are not religious. Is that a virtue in and of itself?

The resolution also includes an incoherent, dog-whistle-ridden passage that is an aspersion on religious people who do not have the right kind of politics: “those most loudly claiming that morals, values, and patriotism must be defined by their particular religious views have used those religious views, with misplaced claims of ‘religious liberty,’ to justify public policy that has threatened the civil rights and liberties of many Americans, in-

cluding but not limited to the LGBT community, women, and ethnic and religious/nonreligious minorities.”

It is odd to include a statement on religious freedom in a resolution about those who are not religious. Yes, religious freedom has applications for the nonreligious—for example, the state should not coerce belief—but that is not quite the context this resolution seems to invoke. And it is hypocritical to attack people for “loudly claiming” values in a resolution that also asserts the “value, ethical soundness, and importance of the religiously unaffiliated demographic.”

The resolution was passed with little thought by people entrusted with the health of the Democratic Party. Someone who was present for the vote told me it came when folks were ready for a long day of debate to be over. The resolution was viewed to be “non-operational,” meaning that it was viewed as just words on a page rather than any actual commitment from the party. (It is not on the D.N.C. website.)

But even if many of those voting on the resolution did not find it important, I can guarantee that the Trump campaign and the Republican Party took note. A resolution promising that the Democratic Party will intentionally build the political power of atheists is not exactly countering fear-mongering by the religious right and President Trump’s “we’re starting to say ‘Merry Christmas’ again” nonsense.

This resolution gives just a glimpse of the tensions in the Democratic Party that had been transcended by Barack Obama and are now being suppressed by the party-unifying disdain for Mr. Trump but that will show up more as Democrats approach political success.

For instance, I believe there will be significant pushback from a large faction of the party should the next Democratic president choose to swear their oath of office with their hand placed on a religious text.

Many Democrats believe that the unpopularity of the Trump administration offers the opportunity to win big by concentrating on broadly shared values and policies and running truly inclusive campaigns. But others believe that Mr. Trump is so offensive that the Democrats can gain a hearing for ideas that previously had little traction in U.S. politics. They do not necessarily believe that Democrats *will* win if they support certain policies but that for the first time they have a *chance* of winning on these ideas.

Some Democrats in the latter category believe that these previously out-of-bounds ideas could gain mass appeal, but others are simply willing to risk losing to Mr. Trump for the chance to promote their ideological preferences. This attitude can be seen most prominently among members of the Democratic Socialists of America, but it was also present in 2016, when a senior strategist for the Hillary Clinton campaign reportedly bragged that they would run the first “post-Christian” campaign.

This “religiously unaffiliated” resolution certainly gave voice to some valid claims and legitimate frustrations with the religious right’s attempt to monopolize the discussion of “values.” But in its carelessness, it is just the kind of thing that helps Republicans hold on to political power.

Michael Wear is the chief strategist for The AND Campaign. He led religious outreach for President Barack Obama’s re-election campaign in 2012. Twitter: @MichaelRWear.

The Bible and the Qur'an: A Comparative Study

Prof. Gabriel S. Reynolds, Ph.D.

University of Notre Dame

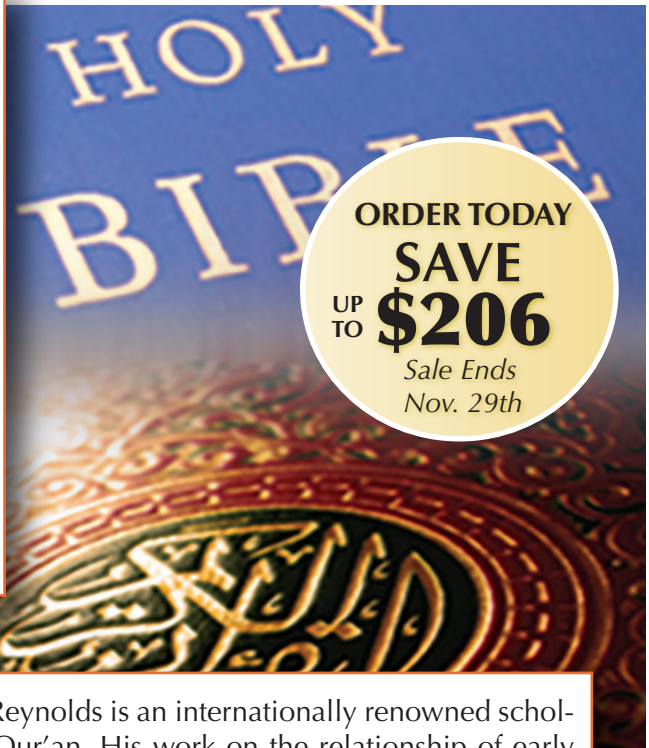


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15. The Qur'an's Self-Understanding
16. The Development of Exegesis in Islamic Tradition
17. The Qur'an and Islamic Law
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Amazon synod gets down to work

Indigenous diaconate, role of women, protecting creation among many topics

By Luke Hansen

The Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for the Pan-Amazonian Region, which concludes in Rome on Oct. 27, entered a new phase on Oct. 10, said Giacomo Costa, S.J., the synod's secretary for information, during a press briefing. That day the synod's small language groups began to meet, signaling the moment in the process when "in a synodal way, everyone gives their contribution" and there is an in-depth "listening to experiences that are crying out, that have no voice."

At previous synods, participants told **America** that the Spirit was most clearly alive and at work in the small group meetings that became places of encounter, listening and transformation among a variety of participants—bishops, experts, auditors and fraternal delegates.

Pope Francis opened the Amazon synod on Oct. 6 with Mass in St. Peter's Basilica, during which he reminded synod participants that "Jesus did not come to bring a gentle evening breeze, but to light a fire on the earth."

He prayed that the spirit of Jesus "may give us his

own daring prudence" and "inspire our synod to renew the paths of the church in Amazonia, so that the fire of mission will continue to burn."

Speaking of the church's mission in the Amazon region, he said, "When peoples and cultures are devoured without love and without respect, it is not God's fire but that of the world. Yet how many times has God's gift been imposed, not offered; how many times has there been colonization rather than evangelization!"

"May God preserve us from the greed of new forms of colonialism," he said. "The fire set by interests that destroy, like the fire that recently devastated Amazonia, is not the fire of the Gospel.

"The fire of God is warmth that attracts and gathers into unity. It is fed by sharing, not by profits. The fire that destroys, on the other hand, blazes up when people want to promote only their own ideas, form their own group, wipe out differences in the attempt to make everyone and everything uniform."

Pope Francis joins a procession at the start of the first session of the Synod of Bishops for the Amazon on Oct. 7.



According to a summary of synod discussions published by Vatican News on Oct. 10, synod participants have been emphasizing the interrelated nature of many issues at this synod: ecological destruction as a risk for the Amazon and the whole planet that constitutes violence against the earth and indigenous people; the importance of “a balance between inculturation and evangelization” and a “greater dialogue between theology and science”; and the conviction that issues of concern to the church in the Amazon also concern the universal church, whether it is the importance of sacraments, the formation of ministers, the role of women or the protection of women against any form of violence.

It is “important to keep the connection among all the themes” and to “combine the local and universal,” Father Costa noted. “In this tension, there is the prospect of a missionary synodality, a new face of the church, capable of announcing the contributions of everybody—lay persons and indigenous peoples and missionaries” and especially “women, recognizing the experience that is being lived out there.”

According to a previous Vatican News summary, participants discussed the need for inculturated celebrations of some sacraments, and a proposal was put forward “to think of establishing...an Amazonian Catholic rite to live and celebrate faith in Christ.”

At the press briefing on Oct. 10, Gloria Liliana Franco Echeverri, O.D.N., of Colombia, the president of the Latin American and Caribbean Confederation of Religious, which represents religious women in 22 countries, was asked about the importance of women in church leadership. Sister Echeverri said that the church is experiencing a *kairos* moment, and “a sign of this *kairos*” is the number of female participants in this synod (33 women are serving as experts and auditors) and the “many others who have participated in the process of listening that took place before the synod.”

Bishop Wilmar Santin, O.Carm., of Itaituba, Brazil, said his local church is “trying to intensify indigenous pastoral ministry” in order to “put into practice what the pope is calling us to do,” which is for the indigenous population “to give shape to the face of the Amazonian church.”

The bishop said he was inspired to begin a permanent

diaconate formation program for the indigenous community after attending a meeting with Cardinal Claudio Hummes, O.F.M., general relator of the synod, in Manaus, Brazil.

The cardinal had said that “Pope Francis told him he has a dream of seeing that every village has its own indigenous priest. They spoke about the difficulties, and the pope said, ‘Begin with what the church already allows: the permanent diaconate,’” the bishop recalled.

“When I heard this,” said Bishop Santin, “I said, ‘Let us start with this, with the permanent diaconate.’”

The diocese started by training lay “ministers of the Word,” now 39 men and nine women who celebrate and preach the Word in their native language. The bishop said the presence of these 48 ministers “fills me with joy” because it reminds him of Pentecost, where the people said, “We have heard in our own language about the great things of God.”

The next step, the bishop said, “is to ordain ministers for baptism and for matrimony.”

The people “have a great awareness of the importance of baptism,” he said, and when they are married, “they want the blessing of God” in a church, “not just married before the state.” Due to the vast distances of the region, “in every village there need to be ministers for baptism and for matrimony.”

The presence of lay ministers also could help increase the church’s presence in indigenous areas where there are no Catholic churches, he said, recounting the story of a man who belonged to an evangelical church. In the course of a conversation, he said, the man revealed that he had “two brothers who were priests and a sister who is a nun.”

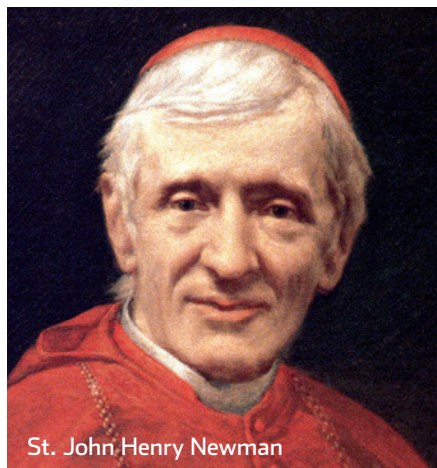
“I asked him why he left the church,” Bishop Santin said. “He told me, ‘When I arrived here, there was no Catholic church. I wanted to listen to the word of God, and I went to the church of the Assembly of God.’”

Bishop Santin told reporters: “We are not arriving in time to all the places because everything is centered on the figure of the father [priest]. We have to change a bit the structure of the church so it is more agile, so that it can advance faster, so that it doesn’t depend just on the priest, because if not, we will not fulfill our mission, which is to preach the word of God.”

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Sainthood picks up pace under recent popes



St. John Henry Newman

On Oct. 13, Pope Francis declared five new saints, including John Henry Newman, the 19th-century British cardinal. As we approach another All Saints Day this year, that brings the number of saints venerated in the Catholic Church to... well, no one knows exactly, but it may be more than 10,000, and the total has risen steadily since St. John Paul II simplified the canonization process in 1983. John Paul II canonized more saints (482) than the popes from the previous 500 years combined, and Pope Francis is more than maintaining that pace, canonizing 893 individuals so far (including the 813 Martyrs of Otranto). In one of the biggest events of his papacy, he canonized Mother Teresa of Calcutta before some 100,000 pilgrims and Romans in St. Peter's Square in 2016.

Francis may end up canonizing hundreds more. "I heard that currently there were some 5,000 causes going on," said Marc Lindeijer, S.J., a researcher at the Bollandist Society, a Jesuit ministry dedicated to research on the lives of saints and martyrs. One reason, he said in an email to **America**, is that "beatifications and canonizations have become an instrument of



St. Frances Xavier Cabrini

papal pastoral policy, with an active search and promotion of...women, laypeople, [those of] non-European origins and others to balance a bit the predominance of Italian and Spanish priests and religious on the calendar."

Among the current causes for sainthood is Augustine Tolton, the first African-American priest in the church and one of eight individuals granted the title "venerable" by Pope Francis in June for martyrdom or "heroic virtue."

Another reason that the church may see more saints in the near future is that Pope Francis recognized a fourth reason for sainthood in 2017. Historically, the church recognized only three criteria: martyrdom, living the virtues of Christian life to a heroic degree and "exceptional cases" based on the confirmation of an ancient tradition of veneration of an individual. Pope Francis added "the heroic acceptance out of charity of certain death in a short term" as distinct from martyrdom, covering situations such as giving assistance to those infected by a contagious and fatal disease.

Robert David Sullivan, senior editor

THE PATH TO SAINTHOOD

Under current church law, there are four steps to sainthood:

Servant of God is the title given to a candidate for sainthood whose cause is under initial investigation, prior to being declared Venerable.

Venerable is the title given to a deceased person recognized formally by the pope as having lived a heroically virtuous life.

Beatification occurs after the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, a department of the Roman Curia, has conducted a rigorous investigation into the person's life and writings to determine whether he or she demonstrates a heroic level of virtue or suffered martyrdom. A miracle attributed to the person's intercession must be proved. Blessed is the title bestowed on a person who has been beatified and accorded limited liturgical veneration.

Saint is the title given to someone who has been formally canonized by the church as sharing eternal life with God, and therefore offered for public veneration and imitation.

U.S. AND CANADIAN SAINTS

United States

- Frances Xavier Cabrini (1850-1917)
- Marianne Cope, O.S.F. (1838-1918)
- Katharine Drexel (1858-1955)
- Rose Philippine Duchesne (1769-1852)
- Théodore Guérin (1798-1856)
- Isaac Jogues (1607-46) and the North American Martyrs
- John Neumann (1811-60)
- Elizabeth Ann Seton (1774-1821)
- Junípero Serra, O.F.M. (1713-84)
- Damien de Veuster (1840-89), known as Father Damien

Canada

- The North American Martyrs: Jean de Brebeuf (1593-1649)
- Noël Chabanel (1613-49), Anthony Daniel (1601-48)
- Charles Garnier (1605-49), Isaac Jogues (1602-46)
- Gabriel Lalemant (1610-49), René Goupil (1607-42) and Jean de Lalande (?-1646).
- Marie of the Incarnation (1599-1672)
- Marguerite Bourgeoys (1620-1700)
- André Bessette, C.S.C. (1845-1937), better known as Brother André
- François de Laval (1623-1708)
- Kateri Tekakwitha (1656-80)
- Marguerite d'Youville (1701-71)

Sources: U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops; Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops; "Papal saints: Once a given, now extremely rare," Pew Research Center, April 24, 2014. Photo credits: St. John Henry Newman (CNS photo from Crosiers), St. Frances Xavier Cabrini (CNS photo/Gregory A. Shemitz).



iStock

German and Austrian Catholic bishops confront the rise of 'nature burials'

Cemetery near the ancient abbey church of St. George on the Island of Reichenau, Germany.

Many people in German-speaking regions in Europe are rejecting traditional Christian liturgies in favor of burial practices mirroring ancient Germanic customs. These include cremation and so-called nature burials, in which remains are buried in unmarked graves in woods, meadows or unincorporated areas, or are scattered as ashes in rivers.

In an interview conducted in February, aired by the Diocese of Cologne's news radio station, Domradio.de, the Rev. Jürgen Quandt, director of a cemetery association in Berlin, said traditional funerals are diminishing in Germany to such a degree that Christian cemeteries are experiencing financial crises. "Coffin burials are becoming the rare exception," he said. "Here in Berlin only 15 to 17 percent of all burials are in coffins. The rest are all urn burials—and more than half of these are not buried in individual graves, but in communal vaults."

In November 2018, the Austrian Bishops' Conference published a document outlining acceptable modern burial customs titled "Fire and Nature Burials: Contemporary Pastoral Practices." According to the bishops, a proper burial place must be "permanent and accessible to everyone," allow for "preservation of the memory of the dead, including a person's name, biography, dignity and individuality" and allow for a Christian symbol such as a cross or work of art to be present to invoke the hope of resurrection. The bishops recommended that graves be blessed and arranged so that visitors can pray and leave remembrance tokens, such as flowers.

The bishops strongly decried anonymous funerals, burials in remote and inaccessible nature areas, and practices in which the identity of a deceased person is erased or their human dignity is compromised. "These options are in no way Christian: to anonymously scatter ashes in nature, air or water; to install an urn in a private home or apart-

ment; to bury remains in a private garden; or to divide ashes into multiple 'remembrance objects,'" the bishops wrote.

In a 2016 study on changing burial customs, the Diocese of Rottenburg-Stuttgart in southern Germany noted cases of urns being "buried" in trees. According to this practice, families can lease a forest tree for 99 years and can use trees in lieu of family plots—a "funeral tree" can be fitted to accommodate 10 urns. In other cases, the human ashes are used as soil to fertilize the tree's roots; proponents of this practice argue that the tree continues the life of the deceased in this manner.

In some privately owned forest cemeteries, markers like gravestones, wreaths and candles are not permitted, and mourners are not allowed to leave behind mementos. Instead, the "grave trees" are merely marked with colored bands and tiny name plaques. The business owners market the idea of anonymity as part of a forest aesthetic. But Catholic officials in Germany argue that these practices reduce the deceased to a state of nonexistence.

"Fundamental concerns remain about these burial practices," wrote the Diocese of Rottenburg-Stuttgart. "They encourage private religion, nature religion, or pantheistic concepts and banish the deceased person even more from the everyday life of the living in often far-remote forests."

But as more people abandon traditional Christian funeral practices, the church is adapting its approach. The Austrian bishops now allow the possibility of Christian funerals in "meadow cemeteries," which some municipalities have established in wooded areas.

Zita Ballinger Fletcher, *journalist and author.*
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Jesuits on the ground promote an 'Amazon like' church

Alfredo Ferro, S.J., labored as he climbed a path in Puerto Nariño toward a handsome new parish church farther up the hill in this indigenous Colombian community on the Amazon River. “I don’t like it,” he said of the whitewashed church with a gabled roof and bell tower.

The church in the Amazon, Father Ferro explained, “should keep with the indigenous reality” and “come closer to the architecture of their houses, of their cultural centers.”

“A church, for me...should be in the style of a *malo-ca*”—a circular, communal structure with a thatched roof found at the center of the local indigenous Ticuna communities—“not like this.”

Father Ferro is among the Catholics promoting a renewed vision of the church in what was until recently an overlooked but vitally important corner of creation. In August, widespread fires focused international attention on the Amazon. Pope Francis, meanwhile, put the region at the center of the Catholic world by convening a special assembly of the Synod of Bishops for the Pan-Amazonian Region this month in Rome.

Priests like Father Ferro are now at the forefront of an evolution in Catholic thinking about the Amazon, which is still populated by significant numbers of indigenous peoples—including uncontacted tribes—but is under growing

threats from urbanization, agricultural interests, loggers and illegal miners. Father Ferro and his colleague, Valerio Sartor, S.J., form the Jesuit Pan-Amazonian Service.

The service was created by the Society of Jesus in 2015 to attend to a region the Jesuits consider a priority in the Americas. Its work is to support what synod organizers call creating a more “Amazon like” church that incorporates the customs and sensibilities of the local population, like indigenous spirituality, and promotes new forms of evangelization.

Father Ferro reeled off a long list of what he considers those new forms of evangelization, including: “Care for the common home” and the Amazon region; “pushing [sustainable] projects and alternative proposals” for development; and “the defense of indigenous peoples.”

“The call to evangelize has to go through an intercultural dialogue, through a great respect for [indigenous] cultures, their cosmology, their spirituality and their way of life. That requires dialogue and deep respect,” Father Ferro said.

The question for the synod, he added, is “What kind of presence should the church have, and how can we build a church that we call ‘a church with an Amazon face?’”

The effort is proving controversial. Many local bishops still cling to the old ways of evangelizing, even as indigenous people abandon the Catholic Church. Critics of the synod



Photo by David Agren

Father Ferro visits with a parishioner in San Francisco, Colombia.

have also raised concerns about the possibility of allowing married men of proven virtue (*viriprobat*) to be ordained as priests to serve in the remote villages of the region.

For his part, Father Ferro expressed exasperation at the chatter around married priests and its focus in the media. “It’s just one part,” he said, speaking from the Jesuits’ base in the Colombian city of Leticia.

Father Ferro’s view is informed by reality more than by ideals. Fathers Ferro and Sartor visit communities along the Amazon and its tributaries throughout the tri-border region, where Colombia, Brazil and Peru meet. Many villages in the region seldom see priests and the community is unable to celebrate the Eucharist. In their absence, evangelical Christians have moved in, often bringing with them a worldview that sees indigenous spirituality as something akin to witchcraft.

The stakes for the synod are high, supporters in the Amazon say. It is about nothing less than whether or not the Catholic Church will continue to have a presence in the region. The traditional model, they say, has run its course.

David Agren contributes from Mexico City.
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GOODNEWS: Fighting for justice in Nigeria’s crowded prisons

For decades Nigeria has struggled to reform its congested prison system. Courts grapple with huge backlogs of cases, compounding delays in the delivery of justice and contributing to prison overcrowding. Almost 70 percent of Nigeria’s 74,000 prisoners are awaiting trial and have never been convicted of any offense.

The Catholic Institute for Development, Justice and Peace, based in the city of Enugu, wants to address this problem. The institute seeks to secure timely access to trials and to improve the living conditions of inmates across the region.

The institute carries out legal advocacy and political lobbying to get state judicial officials, local lawyers, non-governmental organizations, police and prison officers together to improve conditions in Nigeria’s prisons. But the bulk of the institute’s work falls to its welfare desk. This unit provides essential supplies like clothing, food items, footwear and toiletries for prisoners, as well as diapers for the infants of new mothers in prison.

The institute also sponsors health interventions, paying hospital bills, providing drugs and health aids like eyeglasses and assisting pregnant prisoners before and after delivery.

When prisoners are released, the welfare team accompanies them home and tries to convince their families to accept that they have turned over a new leaf. It is a tricky job that comes with some risk, Kelechi Agu, a team member, said.

“Some people had problems with their families before they got imprisoned; and in most cases, families might have forgotten them because they have been in prison for so long or [the families] simply do not want them back and prefer to allow them to stay in the cell,” Ms. Agu explained. “We settle whatever issues they had before and convince them to take the released person back.”

Linus Unah contributes from Nigeria.
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THE THREE AMERICAS AND HOW THEY GROW

Immigration is driving population change in the country and in the church, but there are big regional differences.

By Robert David Sullivan



Both the popular perception and the effects of immigration are different in broad regions of the United States that are shaped by history and economic development.



Frontier

Disproportionately dependent on internal migration for population growth



Gateway

Disproportionately dependent on international immigration for population growth

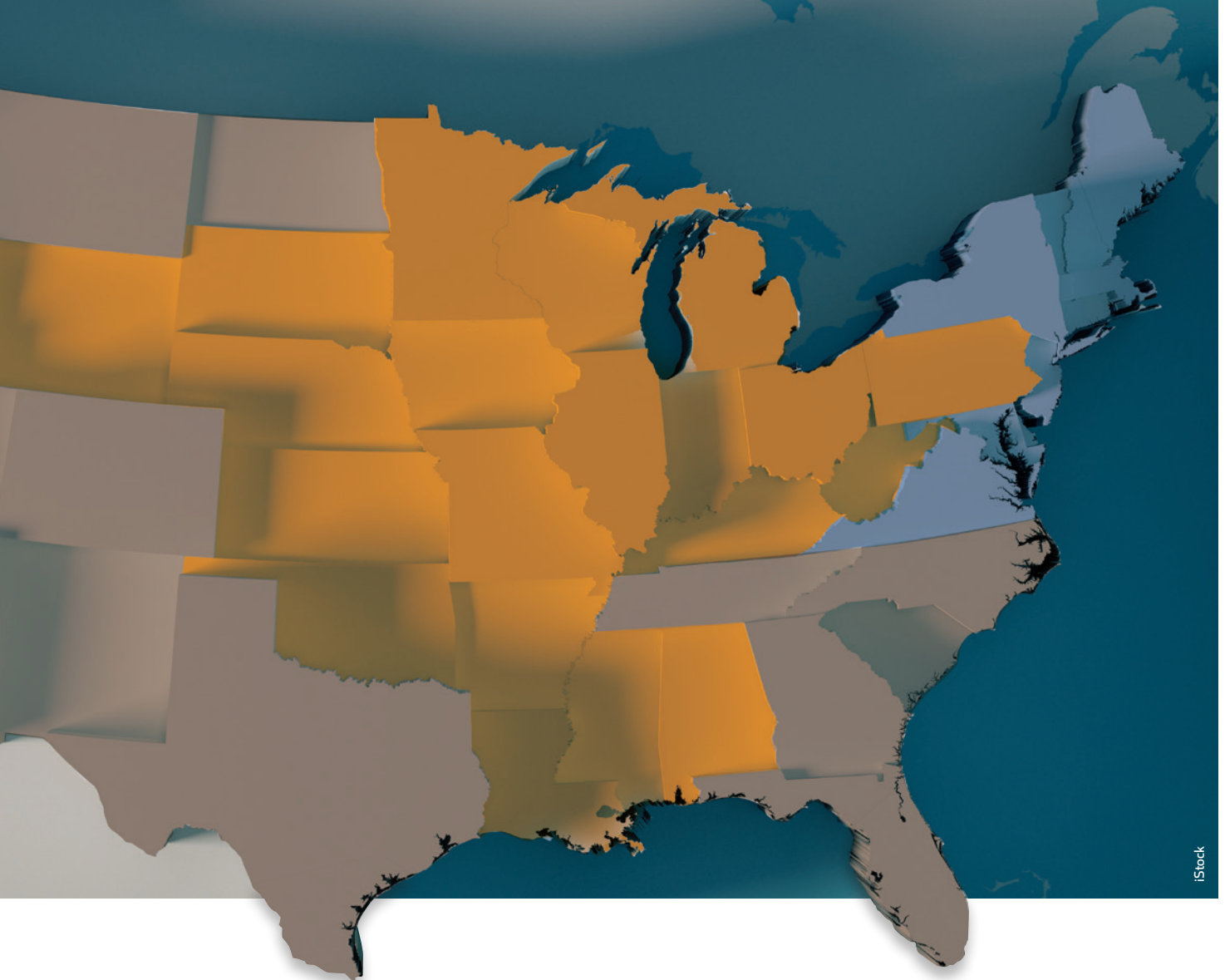


Great Interior

Disproportionately dependent on births for population growth

Immigration is reshaping both the United States and the U.S. Catholic Church. As a political issue, it helped to put Donald J. Trump in the White House, and voter reaction to his administration's punitive measures toward migrants and near-total ban on accepting refugees will be key issues in the 2020 election. For the Catholic Church, immigration has been driving a major geographic shift to the South and West, with more parishioners, mostly Latino, in states that historically have not had such large Catholic populations.

Immigration is also a possible solution to the problem that both the country and the church are aging while birth-rates are declining and young people leave the church. Both the church and the nation will steadily shrink without newcomers from beyond our national borders. Yet a rapid increase in the foreign-born population risks a social and political backlash. Immigration has also become another point of debate over the extent to which society as a whole should follow Christian principles: Even if your parish should “welcome the stranger,” does that mean your national government has to?



One reason immigration is such an intractable issue in Congress and in the United States as a whole is that it means different things to people in different places. This should not be surprising in a nation so complex that there is an ever-growing genre of geographic revisionism, with books and magazine articles devoted to carving it into regions more sensible than our 50 states. But we can boil down the history of and attitudes toward immigration into three main regions, regions with some constancy but also with continuously shifting boundaries.

In the Frontier region, America is still being built. This region currently includes states in the Southeast and West states where land is plentiful and U.S. citizens are moving in by the thousands every day. This region is where immigrants are welcomed by the construction and retail industries, but rapid population growth worries environmentalists and taxpayers who wonder how to finance new schools and social services. The creation of “mega-parishes” in these areas can serve Catholics at a time when it is hard to find pastors, but not everyone is comfortable with having

1,000 people at a Mass.

The Gateway region has long accommodated migrants. It currently includes the Northeast Corridor from Boston to Washington, Chicago and other parts of the Upper Midwest, and California—places where the civic and church infrastructure is already there for large populations, and immigrants are largely replacing American citizens who are moving elsewhere. Indeed, without immigrants, many of these communities would face economic decline.

Finally, there is what could be called the Great Interior of the United States—places like Appalachia, the interior South and the Farm Belt. After initial growth spurts when they were absorbed by the United States in the 18th and 19th centuries, these regions generally grew slowly and rarely experienced large influxes of migrants, either from other states or other nations. Population growth came from families having children. But now much of the country’s interior is experiencing population loss, thanks to low birth rates and an outflow of educated residents looking for well-paying jobs. There are conflicted attitudes toward immigration here. Re-

1. MCKENZIE COUNTY, N.D.

had the sharpest population increase in the country (+114%), thanks to jobs in the oil drilling industry.

2. ALEXANDER COUNTY, ILL.

had the steepest population decline in the U.S.: -26.4%.

3. STOREY COUNTY, NEV.

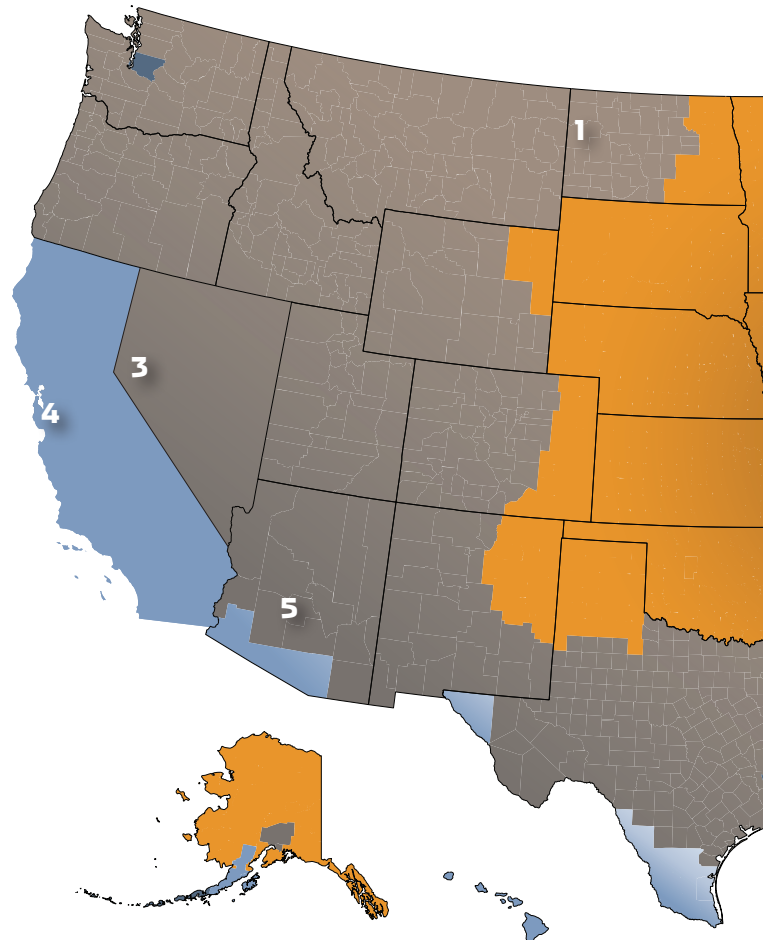
just south of Reno, 79% of the population was born in another state, the highest percentage in the U.S.

4. SANTA CLARA, CAL. (SAN JOSE)

39% of residents were born in another country, but only 15% were born in another state.

5. MARICOPA COUNTY, ARIZ. (PHOENIX)

gained 280,123 U.S.-born residents moving from elsewhere, the biggest such jump in the country.



sentiment toward “globalization” and the outsourcing of jobs runs high, but there is also a realization that immigrants are needed to replenish the workforce.

Indeed, this region is now experiencing the most rapid growth in the foreign-born population (easily accomplished when it had been so low for so long) and, not coincidentally, in the Catholic and Latino populations. But this growth is unevenly distributed within the region. And political analysts noted that sudden increases in the foreign-born population in communities scattered throughout states like Iowa, Kansas and Georgia (in places where meat-packing plants and other employers seek low-cost labor) were correlated with support for Mr. Trump in the 2016 election.

A Brief History

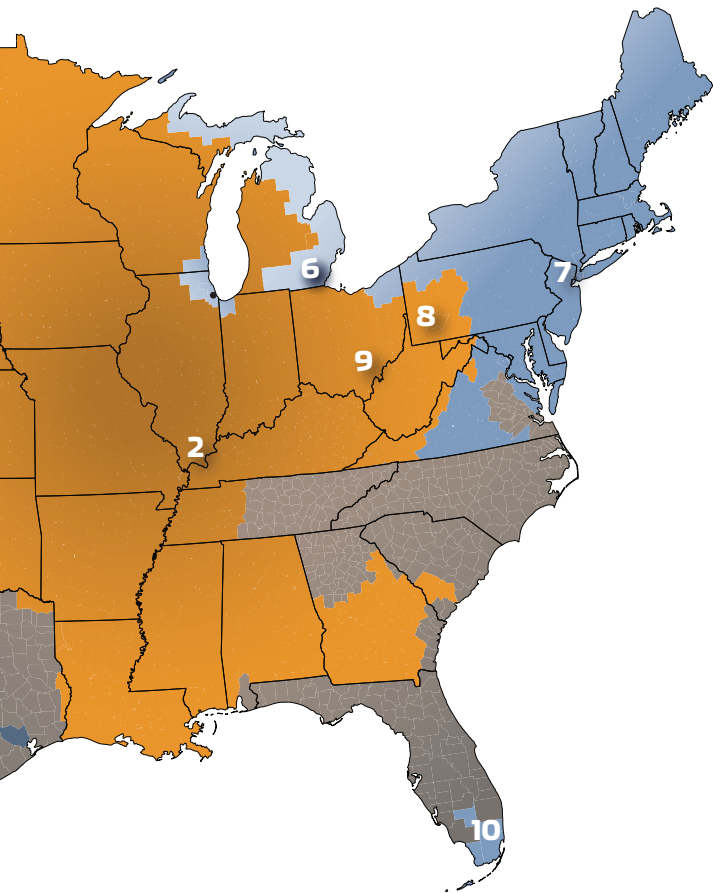
Sometime between 1910 and 1920, the population of the United States passed 100 million (behind only China, India and the Russian Empire at the time), and about 14 percent were immigrants. As of Aug. 1, 2019, the United States was home to just under 330 million people, and, again, about 14 percent were born in other countries.

Those similar numbers do not reflect that the scope and character of immigration to the United States has changed drastically over the past century. After a long wave of immigration from Europe, the 1920s brought a major effort to reduce the flow of newcomers for a variety of reasons. These included an isolationist mindset after the horrors of World War I, revulsion at the crowded conditions of immigrant neighborhoods in major cities, a eugenics craze and a familiar fear that America’s “cultural identity” was at risk. This

fear was associated with anti-Catholicism as well as racism and helped fuel a resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan. (The Catholic share of the U.S. population in 1920 was very close to the foreign-born share, slightly above 15 percent. Catholics now make up about 23 percent of the population.)

The reaction against immigrants culminated in the Johnson-Reed Immigration Act of 1924, which limited immigrants overall and imposed a bias in favor of nationalities that were already in the United States in significant numbers. (It completely excluded immigrants from Asia.) By 1970, the foreign-born share of the U.S. population had bottomed out at 4.7 percent, and the actual number of immigrants, 9.6 million, was the lowest since the beginning of the century.

The country’s population still grew during the downturn in immigration. After the Great Depression and World War II came the baby boom generation, which lasted until a sharp fall in birth rates during the 1960s. Not only did the population spike in the postwar period; it formed new geographic patterns. During the 1950s, suburbanization (helped by the new interstate highway system and federal loan programs designed to encourage homeownership) spurred employers and families to move out of central cities and to the South and West. Population growth rates from 1950 to 1960 were



6. WAYNE COUNTY, MICHIGAN (DETROIT)

lost **66,646**, the largest population drop in the U.S. But during the same period, its foreign-born population increased by **36,405**.

7. NEW YORK CITY

gained **479,960** foreign-born residents but lost **768,308** U.S.-born residents. Still, there were enough births for the city to grow by **223,760**.

8. WESTMORELAND COUNTY, PA.

was the site of **25,519** births and **36,731** deaths—the biggest natural decline outside of retirement areas.

9. LAWRENCE COUNTY, OHIO

not only lost **1,781** U.S. citizens from migration, it also lost **211** foreign-born residents.

10. MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLA.

gained **378,121** foreign-born residents, the largest jump in the U.S. During the same period, it saw a net loss of **215,712** U.S.-born residents.

more than 70 percent in Alaska, Arizona, Florida and Nevada and 49 percent in California. International migration may have been down, but internal moves generated plenty of economic activity. California alone gained a net 3.1 million people as a result of domestic migration.

In 2018, the U.S. birth rate hit a 32-year low, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that total fertility rates have been below “replacement,” or “the level at which a given generation can exactly replace itself,” since the early 1970s. This may be good for the environment, but it is not a good situation economically. Fewer people means fewer workers and fewer customers, and fewer young people to take care of an aging population. This summer, the Blackstone Group, an investment company, estimated that without immigration, the U.S. working-age population would drop by 17 million by 2035.

Fortunately for the economy, immigration to the United States surged during the past few decades, before dropping significantly in 2017, the first year of the Trump administration. A major reason is the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, which reversed the 1924 immigration law by ending preferences for European immigrants and making it easier for relatives of U.S. citizens and permanent residents to enter the country. The result was 59 mil-

lion immigrants entering the United States in the half-century since the passage of the 1965 law and a foreign-born share of the population that in 2017 was the highest since 1910. Unlike previous waves of immigrants, these newcomers were mostly from Latin America and Asia.

But immigration never affects every part of a country equally. In 2013, half of all immigrants to the United States were concentrated in just four states: California, Florida, New York and Texas. The difference from previous immigration waves is that the one following the 1965 law has eventually reached almost everywhere, at least to some extent. In 1920, there were 11 states, all in the South, where less than 3 percent of the population was foreign-born. By 1970, there were 28 states with a foreign-born population of less than 3 percent. But in 2017, only three states fell into that category (Mississippi, Montana and West Virginia). Immigration is far more visible to far more Americans than it was a century ago.

This increased visibility has political implications. Although the estimated number of undocumented migrants in the United States peaked in 2007 and has been slowly declining since, Mr. Trump centered his 2016 presidential campaign on what he called the “crisis” of “illegal immigration.” But even before he ran, any immigration reform package that included a pathway to citizenship for undocumented migrants was radioactive among Republican Party voters opposed to “amnesty.” Support for such a package was blamed for the upset defeat of then-House majority leader, Eric Cantor, in a 2014 Republican primary in Virginia, one of the states that has only recently gained a large

Both the church and the nation will steadily shrink without newcomers from beyond our national borders.

immigrant population.

Public opinion is moving in the opposite direction from Mr. Trump. A poll in February 2019 released by Gallup found that 81 percent of U.S. adults favored allowing undocumented immigrants “the chance to become U.S. citizens if they meet certain requirements over a period of time.” In the same poll, Gallup reported, the share of Americans wanting to increase immigration levels grew from 21 percent in June 2016 to a record 30 percent, though recent polls have found Republican voters to be less supportive of the idea.

Those numbers suggest that the United States as a whole has not become more xenophobic in recent years, but they do not reflect differences in various parts of the country that depend on economic and social trends. In 2015, a P.R.R.I. poll found that 50 percent of all U.S. adults agreed with the statement “Immigrants strengthen American society,” compared with 34 percent who said “Immigrants threaten traditional American customs and values.” At the state level, however, the share agreeing with the first statement ranged from 35 percent in West Virginia, which has never had a large foreign-born population, to 60 percent in Hawaii and Massachusetts, both states that have a long history of attracting immigrants.

As noted above, there are three distinct regions affected by immigration in different ways.

The Frontier

Americans may be proud of their entire country, but most reside in only a fraction of it. From 2010 through 2018, there was a net loss of U.S.-born residents in almost two-thirds of all counties—2,040 of them, compared with the 1,121 counties where more U.S.-born people moved *in* than out.

Those 1,121 counties roughly comprise the Frontier region, and they are mostly in the South and West, attracting U.S.-born citizens from the Northeast and Midwest. Many of these counties are new job centers, but a significant number are retirement communities. These counties have generally lower housing costs, and many are in states with low income taxes, relying more on sales taxes for government revenue. (Sales taxes can be more politically popular in states with a great deal of tourism and many newcomers

buying new homes and furnishings.)

For many of the same reasons—job opportunities, affordable homes—the Frontier region is also attractive to international migrants. Indeed, several Western states, including Idaho and Montana, had large immigrant populations (in particular, Chinese and Irish) in their early years of statehood, attracted by jobs building railroads or mining copper and other metals. To this day, there are Irish Catholic strongholds in places like Butte, Mont.

The Frontier region now principally attracts people from other states, but from 2010 to 2018, several of the states that registered the most gains from American citizens moving in—notably, Arizona, Florida, Texas and Washington—also had some of the biggest gains from international immigration.

The Frontier is also where the U.S. Catholic Church is facing its biggest infrastructure challenge, as it tries to keep up with major increases in the Catholic population in states like North Carolina, Georgia and Nevada. According to the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, even as the church has closed hundreds of parishes in the other two regions over the past four decades, it has raced to keep up with demand in Frontier states, opening 293 parishes in Texas alone. Most of these new churches have more than 1,000 seats in their worship spaces.

The Gateway

Overall, 14 percent of the U.S. population is foreign-born, but there are wide regional differences in this figure—from less than 2 percent in West Virginia to 27 percent in our biggest state, California. The places where the immigrant population is and has historically been large enough to become an indispensable source of workers as well as civic and religious leaders form a region that could be called the Gateway. These are places that have steadily lost U.S.-born residents to the Frontier region but still thrive, at least for now, because of immigrants.

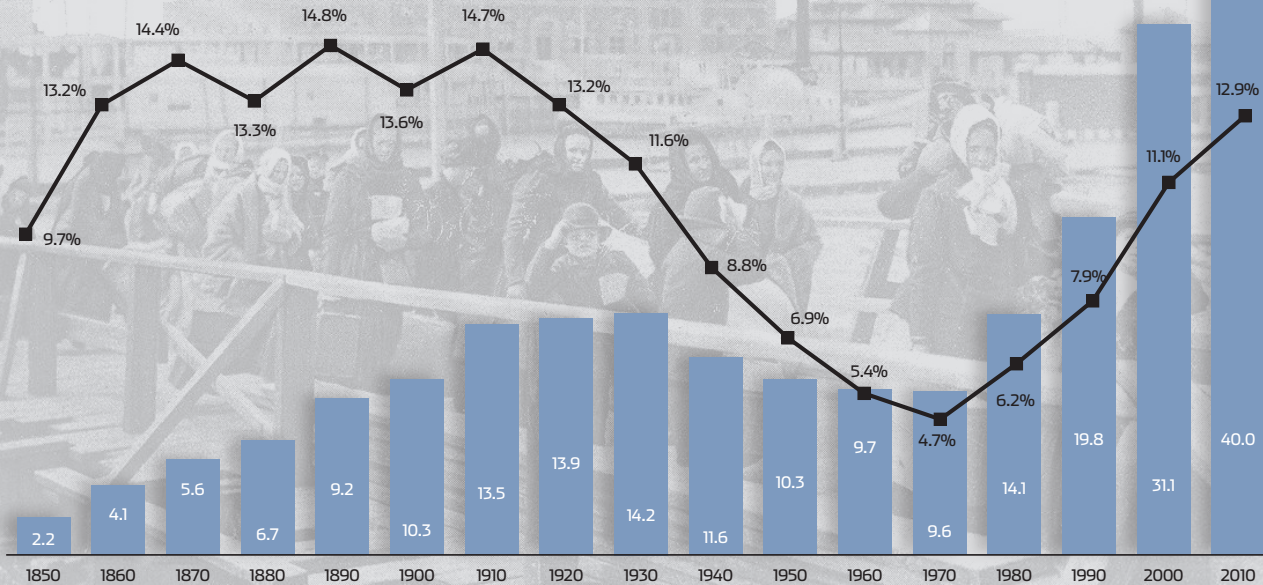
New York City has been emblematic of the American immigrant experience for centuries. California, however, was part of the Frontier region until recently, when urbanization and high housing prices resulted in a continuous outflow of U.S.-born citizens.

One illustration of the state’s transition is Christ Cathedral, in the Orange County city of Garden Grove, which this year became the first known instance of a non-Catholic church being converted to a Catholic cathedral. The massive, 34-acre property was once the Crystal Cathedral, home of the Protestant evangelist Robert Schuller. Its construction was completed in 1981, when the state was still booming as a result of U.S. citizens moving there

Foreign-Born Population and Percentage of Total Population, for the United States: 1850 to 2010

■ foreign-born population (in millions)
 —■ percent of total population

The foreign-born declined as a share of the total U.S. population from 1910 through 1970, before rebounding in a “second wave” of immigration. The Trump administration may succeed in abruptly ending that wave.



Data from the United States Census Bureau Image: Library of Congress

from other states. By the time the Catholic Church renovated and rededicated the structure, moving vans were constantly leaving California for other Western or Sun Belt states, and immigrants were buying homes and opening businesses. When Christ Cathedral began offering Masses this year, only three were in English; four were in Vietnamese, three in Spanish and one in Mandarin. (According to a CARA study from 2011, nearly one in three U.S. parishes celebrated Mass at least once a month in a language other than English.)

From 2010 to 2018, there were 181 counties that would have lost population if not for international migration. That may not sound like much, but this group includes some of the country’s biggest population centers, including Los Angeles County, Miami-Dade County and the boroughs of Brooklyn and Queens in New York City. (In Chicago’s Cook County, the influx of immigrants was not quite enough to prevent an overall population loss.)

Looking at a different measure, 39 of the nation’s 283 metropolitan areas would have lost population if not for immigrants, including New York City, Chicago, Philadelphia, Detroit, St. Louis, Providence and Milwaukee. And nine states would have lost population if not for immigrants: Maine, Michigan, Mississippi (something of an anomaly because of the tiny numbers involved), New

Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island and Vermont.

Politically, the Gateway is heavily Democratic, while the other two regions leaned Republican in 2016. The CNN political analyst Ronald Brownstein noted that Mr. Trump “lost 16 of the 20 states where foreign-born residents constituted the largest share of the population.... Even in the relatively more diverse states he won, he lost the vast majority of the big urban centers where immigrants and other minorities generally concentrate.” In addition, Democratic candidates hold “nearly 9 in 10 of the House seats with more foreign-born residents than average.”

In August, U.S. Senator Josh Hawley, a Republican from Missouri, implicitly criticized the leaders and even the voters of the Gateway region, complaining of “their cosmopolitan priorities” in a keynote speech to the National Conservatism Conference. “They identify as ‘citizens of the world,’” he said, and “their primary loyalty is to the global community.” Mr. Hawley decried an agenda of “more immigration, more movement of capital, more trade on whatever terms.”

Mr. Hawley thus pretty much described the ethos of New York City since its founding, and his contempt underscores the difference between the Gateway region and our last region, the Great Interior.

POPULATION CHANGE, 2010-18

Migrants from other states exceeded natural increase:

Arizona
Colorado
Delaware
Florida
Idaho
Maine
Montana
Nevada
North Carolina
Oregon
South Carolina
Tennessee
Washington

Population gain only because of international immigration:

Maine
Michigan
Mississippi
New Jersey
New York
Ohio
Pennsylvania
Rhode Island
Vermont

Population loss:

Connecticut
Illinois
West Virginia

The Great Interior

The Great Interior could be characterized by self-sufficiency. After initial growth spurts, states in this region have generally had slow but steady “natural” population growth—the demographic term referring to births outnumbering deaths. The most rural of the three regions, the Great Interior has an electorate that has maintained a certain wariness of the federal government. (The Frontier has had many “anti-Washington” political leaders, but it also depends on federal assistance to cope with rapidly growing and urbanizing populations.)

But this region now faces population losses, thanks to declining birth rates and the long-term erosion of manufacturing, mining and farming jobs. In recent years, a handful of “superstar cities” in the Frontier and Gateway regions have been attracting high-paying jobs and pulling educated workers from the Great Interior. Incomes in the non-coastal South are falling further below the national average after almost catching up a few decades ago.

From 2010 to 2018, three states (Connecticut, Illinois and West Virginia) registered population losses, and 1,661 counties (over half the total in the United States) lost people. Some of the biggest counties to lose at least 10 percent of their population were in the Great Interior, including Jefferson County, Ark. (Pine Bluff); Pike County, Ky. (in the heart of “coal country”); and Logan County, W.Va. Except for those with mostly black populations, these counties generally gave lopsided margins to Mr. Trump in the 2016 election.

In September, the political commentator Francisco Toro compared “Trump country” to Japan, which has long been resistant to significant immigration. It was not a positive comparison: In Japan, “a chronic dearth of new workers has left economic growth lagging for a generation, turning ‘japanification’ into economic shorthand for decline.”

But though this region has historically attracted far fewer immigrants than the Frontier and Gateway have, it is where the foreign-born population (including undocumented migrants) has increased the fastest in recent years. The result is significant Latino and Asian populations scattered across states where “foreign-born” had long connoted German and Irish immigrants.

In Iowa, for example, immigration has resulted in a 130 percent increase in the still-small Latino population from 2000 to 2017, according to the State Data Center of Iowa. But that increase was hardly even across the state; it was 831 percent in Ringgold County and 624 percent in Lyon County. (Lyon County, a major pig-farming center, is in the congressional district of Steve King, a Republican notorious for his rhetoric against immigrants.)

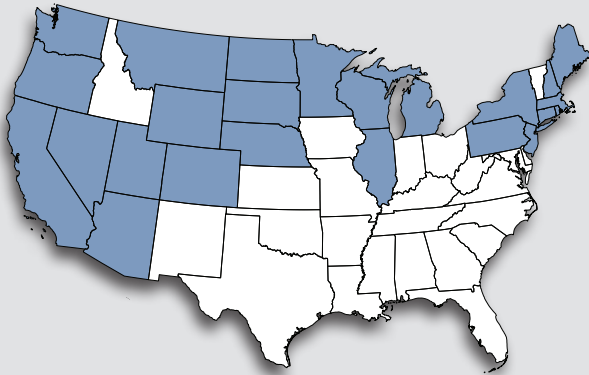
The Great Interior has complicated attitudes toward immigration, to say the least. There is widespread anger at a perceived competition for jobs (as well as the outsourcing of jobs to other nations), and Senator Hawley’s comments about “cosmopolitanism” indicate discomfort with the idea that the heavily urban Gateway region offers a guide to the rest of the United States.

But among political leaders, especially in cities, there is a recognition that immigrants could help prevent the economic death spirals of out-migration. In upstate New York, officials in Buffalo, Syracuse and Utica credited refugees with revitalizing their cities. When the Trump administration drastically cut the number of refugees accepted by the United States, these cities started an advertising campaign to poach refugees from elsewhere in the country. Local leaders in Maine have also looked to refugees and other immigrants as a way to deal with an impending shortage of workers, especially in elder care.

One idea meant to help both immigrants and places facing population decline is “heartland” or “place based” visas, which would allow specific communities to issue temporary visas to skilled foreign-born workers. (Pete Buttigieg, the mayor of South Bend, Ind., who is a current Democratic presidential candidate, has endorsed such a program.) Matthew Yglesias, of the website Vox, wrote optimistically, “The visas could also make immigration a less toxic issue in national politics, reframing migration as a source of national strength that should be strategically deployed rather than as a burden to be avoided.”

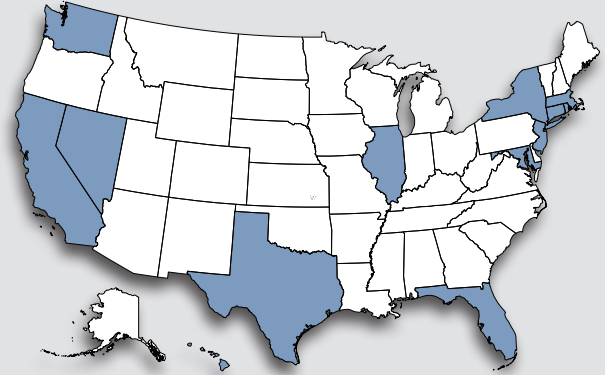
That view may be naïve, given emotions around the is-

1910 FOREIGN-BORN POPULATION ABOVE NATIONAL AVERAGE



TOP 10 STATES WITH HIGHEST % OF FOREIGN-BORN, WITH TOP COUNTRY OF ORIGIN (1910)	1. Rhode Island	33%	Italy
	2. Massachusetts	32%	Canada
	3. New York	30%	Russia
	4. Connecticut	30%	Italy
	5. North Dakota	27%	Norway
	6. Minnesota	26%	Sweden
	7. New Jersey	26%	Italy
	8. Montana	25%	Great Britain
	9. California	25%	Germany
	10. Nevada	24%	Italy

2017 FOREIGN-BORN POPULATION ABOVE NATIONAL AVERAGE



TOP 10 STATES WITH HIGHEST % OF FOREIGN-BORN, WITH TOP COUNTRY OF ORIGIN (2017)	1. California	27%	Mexico
	2. New York	23%	Dominican Republic
	3. New Jersey	23%	India
	4. Florida	21%	Cuba
	5. Nevada	20%	Mexico
	6. Hawaii	19%	Philippines
	7. Texas	17%	Mexico
	8. Massachusetts	17%	China
	9. Maryland	15%	El Salvador
	10. Connecticut	15%	India

Data from the U.S. Census Bureau and the Pew Research Center.

sue and the resurgence of nationalism in the United States. Even the most rational—critics might say bloodless—economic argument for immigration cannot settle the debate. In his speech to the National Conservatism Conference, Senator Hawley said, “Our elites distrust patriotism and dislike the common culture left to us by our forbearers [sic].” There will surely be many in the Great Interior who will agree that immigration is not worth the risk of losing this “common culture.”

Deciding for the Future

Place-based visas could be one way to address immigration policy by applying the knowledge that different parts of the United States have different histories and economic needs. But any program that too tightly restricts the movement of immigrants *within* the United States would be a bad fit for a free-market system and would probably be unconstitutional.

Eventually, Congress and the president will need to hash out a national immigration policy that will benefit all three regions. Similarly, the federal government will need to decide whether to address population losses and looming workforce shortages in the Great Interior region (one proposal is to move government jobs there) or accept them as fair outcomes of our competitive economic system.

As for the Catholic Church, it has the benefit of a universalist ethos, and the U.S. bishops have consistently been supportive of migrants’ rights and immigrant communities. Pope Francis, too, has pushed back against the idea that nationalism and restrictions on migration are the proper way to remedy the economic inequities caused by a globalized economy.

But there are still divisions among the faithful in the United States on how to view a future in which population growth comes from immigration—more than one in five U.S. Catholics are foreign-born—rather than from raising children. Indeed, a 2015 poll by the Pew Research Center found that 55 percent of U.S. Catholics agreed that immigrants “strengthen” the country through “hard work and talents,” as opposed to 38 percent who said immigrants were a “burden” on society. That was a bit higher than the 51 percent of all Americans who said immigrants strengthen the country—but only because 87 percent of Latino Catholics took that view. Only 36 percent of non-Hispanic white Catholics felt the same way. Church teaching may be clear, but it may be that the views of U.S. Catholics also depend on where they live.

Robert David Sullivan is a senior editor at *America*.

Beautiful Bones





How the Day of the Dead can help us live

By Sonja Livingston

We drive through the gate marked Guadalupe Cemetery, emerge from the car and blink back the midday Arizona sun. Surrounded by houses on all sides, we worried we were lost as we snaked through the maze of suburban streets. Just when we had nearly given up, there it was—a walled-in plot of dirt and rustic crosses hidden at the housing development's core.

Many attendees at the Muertos y Marigolds (“The Dead and Marigolds”) parade in Albuquerque’s South Valley have their faces painted like skeletons. The atmosphere of the parade is celebratory, but it is also rooted in solemnity and faith.

The little cemetery is open to the public, but my husband and I are careful in our approach. Sacred to the Yaqui people, the place is clearly special, but the few people here do not seem to notice us or care. A family eats under a simple shelter. Trash bins are stuffed with empty cartons and cake boxes. Burned-out tea lights arranged into crosses ornament most of the graves. There is the sense that a grand party has been had, and we are stragglers refusing to let the festivities fade.

This is partly correct. It is the day after the Day of the Dead. Just yesterday, the people of Guadalupe arrived carrying baskets of food in pick-up trucks loaded with cases of votive candles and potted plants. They sang hymns and performed sacred dances as they repaired and decorated their ancestors’ graves. From morning until night the cemetery was filled with the sounds of music, laughter and prayer.

A few scraggly ironwoods and prickly pears provide dabs of green in the dusty landscape, but most color comes from crosses that have been whitewashed and ornamented with paper flowers. Some bear photographs, images of the saints and offerings of water and the favorite foods of deceased loved ones. One gravesite includes a serving of fried chicken complete with a biscuit and an open can of beer. Even the simplest gravesites are marked with glitter and confetti. Streamers and balloons hang from mesquite trees. It is like a child’s birthday party, like an especially festive wedding, as if a massive piñata has cracked open and covered the five-acre cemetery near Tempe with sequins and flowers.

“We don’t have to stay long,” I say. My husband does not like cemeteries as much as I do. In my hometown of Rochester, N.Y., I regularly pass the graves of Susan B. Anthony and Frederick Douglass as part of my walks through Mount Hope. The Hollywood Cemetery in Richmond, Va., is home to presidents and heroes, but I stick to its southern perimeter with a view of the James River and an emerald embankment of kudzu plants where the trains cut through. When I lived in Memphis, strolling among the southern magnolias while reading headstones at Elmwood Cemetery helped to ground me in my new city.

Cemeteries tell stories. Of abolitionists and suffragists. Of Confederate spies and yellow fever epidemics. Of

tragedy, opportunity and lost love. Guadalupe Cemetery is no exception.

When the first Yaqui people began to arrive here from Mexico in 1883, they were battered and nearly broken. Thousands of the indigenous people were killed trying to defend their homeland, and thousands more were sold into slavery and lost to the grueling conditions of harvesting sugar cane and tobacco. Some fled to the United States and settled in Arizona, Nevada and Texas.

One band of Yaqui traveled to the desert near Phoenix, where they worked on farms and canals in the Salt River Valley. They named their settlement Guadalupe as a testament to their faith and devotion to Our Lady. When the photographer Dane Coolidge visited in 1909, he found an adobe church and houses made of mesquite poles and cactus ribs. Five years later, the Yaqui were moved from their settlement onto a stretch of nearby desert. Even as they gathered up their families and once again made a home of the most inhospitable terrain, the graves of those who had perished in the early years were marked with flowers and crosses and remained in their original settlement, the stretch of earth on which I now stand.

‘Muertos y Marigolds’

Despite my fondness for cemeteries, I am not always comfortable with death. I lost my brother last spring





All photos taken by the author.

after he struggled for years with illness and addiction. Johnny's life had always been plagued by a certain amount of hardship and sadness. I wrestled with how to handle this in life, and his death struck me with its finality: My relationship with Johnny was over. Even though "life had not ended," according to Catholic funeral liturgy, "only changed," I thought of my brother now in the past tense and with regret. *He deserved so much better*, I thought. *I should have tried harder to love him.*

Now, as I walk among the vibrant and frequently visited graves of the Yaqui cemetery, the line between the living and the dead seems to blur. I think back to last year. Four hundred miles northeast of Guadalupe Cemetery, a group of skeletons stood giggling beside me in Albuquerque. The girls wore black leggings ornamented with sparkling femurs and tibias and T-shirts featuring shimmering ribcages.

Petals bloomed from their eye sockets and the points of their chins. Their hair was pulled into braids and trimmed with black ribbons. One girl lifted a candy skull to her mouth and bit down with a row of tiny teeth. In any other setting, the sight of a child dressed as a skeleton biting into a skull would be cause for concern, but it was the *Muertos y Marigolds* (The Dead and Marigolds) parade in Albuquerque's South Valley, where skeletons outnumbered bare-faced revelers two to one.

I have to admit I have never been a fan of skeletons, perhaps because they are such straightforward symbols of death. "Todos somos calaveras," said José Guadalupe Posada, the Mexican artist famous for his extravagant *calaveras*. "We are all skeletons." At *Muertos y Marigolds*, there was no avoiding this fact. Skeletons walked by in wide sombreros and delicate bridal veils. They passed by on skateboards



Cemeteries tell stories. Of abolitionists and suffragists. Of Confederate spies and yellow fever epidemics. Of tragedy, opportunity and lost love. 🍂🍂

and stilts, in sky-blue Chevy pickups, in lowriders and old VW vans. There were laughing skeletons and serious skeletons, singing skeletons and little skeletons who looked as if they could use a nap and a hug.

Oddly enough, none of the skeletons spooked me in Albuquerque. In fact, the main difference in how people approach the Day of the Dead and Halloween is that there is nothing morbid or unnatural about death in celebrations of the former. At the Muertos y Marigolds Parade, people took Posada's proclamation to heart. *Look at me*, they seemed to say; *I'm a constellation of beautiful bones*. A woman dressed as the Virgen de Guadalupe seemed to float down Isleta Boulevard crowned with zinnias and haloed by a gilded nimbus. A stormtrooper marched past with a row of teeth painted onto his helmet. A trio of violinists in silver-studded bolero jackets flashed glittery cobwebs on their faces.

But as much as the parade was celebratory, the holiday is rooted in solemnity and faith. Desiree Sánchez's family regularly attends the Muertos y Marigolds parade but only after praying as a family beforehand, preparing an altar for the deceased and remembering them with photographs and stories. Even as they paint the children's faces into *calaveras* for the parade, the dead are remembered and honored for All Souls Day. At 20, Ms. Sánchez has attended the parade since she was a child and sees it as an important expression of the family and faith.

Another woman I spoke to said Día de Los Muertos is fun but also sad. Alexis Estella Muñoz Rivera, 21, told me the day is all about connection to those who have gone before us as well as to Mexico, where she and so many families in the South Valley have roots. "It's like everyone is coming together," she said, "people you know and those you don't."

Not everyone attends the parade, of course. Some choose to keep their celebrations private. The ladies I speak with in the gift shop at San Felipe de Neri Church in Old Town like to keep things low key. So does my Uber driver,

who sets up an altar at home. "I have pictures of my grandparents and my brother," Jaime smiles as he describes his *ofrenda*, a customary, three-tiered altar kept for ancestors. "My friends." His offerings include traditional foods "and a glass of Scotch because that's what my father liked best." Whether they attend they parade or not, everyone I spoke to says the holiday is both celebratory and somber. This may be hard for outsiders like me to understand, a holiday that celebrates even as it mourns.

At the parade, organizers distributed marigolds to the crowd of thousands before the parade began. The gangly stems were woven into wreaths and draped around heads and necks. The florets were pulled from the stems and tucked behind ears. Known as *cempasúchil* in Náhuatl, or *flor de muertos* (flower of the dead) in Spanish, the marigold was sacred to the Aztecs. With their bright color and pungent scent, the flowers were said to act like little lanterns that guided the dead home.

Día de Los Muertos originated thousands of years ago with Mexico's native people, who viewed death as part of the natural continuum. As Christina Zarate writes for the Smithsonian Latino Center, celebrating the deceased had been part of pre-European Mesoamerican cultures for centuries, a practice that indigenous people were able to preserve and combine with Catholic traditions to create what we now know as Día de los Muertos. Following the arrival of Spanish conquerors and missionaries in the New World, the church moved the summer holiday to coincide with All Saints Day and All Souls Day. Pre-Columbian Catholicism and indigenous custom merged—though not without conflict—into a sacred tradition that welcomes the dead into our lives not simply in concept but in practice. Celebrated from Oct. 31 through Nov. 2, Día de los Muertos bridges Halloween with the Catholic holy days of All Saints and All Souls; and while there is some overlap—especially with the feast of All Souls—the Day of the Dead is all and none of these things alone.

Desert Flowers

At the Guadalupe cemetery in Arizona, we come across a gravesite encircled by marigolds. Overhead, a canopy is festooned with streamers and *papel picado*, the festive Mexican banners featuring vibrant color and cut-out shapes. The Virgen de Guadalupe is painted onto the cross and surrounded by pink hearts. An *ofrenda* is dressed with red cloth and topped with a serape runner. An image of a woman smiling from an 8 inch by 10 inch frame is surrounded by candles featuring the saints. The altar is laden with offerings—crosses and glasses of water and




On the Day of the Dead in Guadalupe Cemetery in Phoenix, gravesites are festively decorated with paper flowers, glitter and confetti. One gravesite includes a serving of fried chicken complete with a biscuit and an open can of beer.

pan de muerto (bread of the dead). Clearly, this woman is well-loved, I think and wonder why I do not put my favorite picture of my brother into a frame. Johnny is young in the photograph, scrappy like most of the boys in our rough neighborhood, full of energy and life. But when I look at it, I feel only loss. I stare again into the photograph of the woman on the lavishly decorated grave and move on.

A handful of weathered crosses near the back wall are nearly swallowed by the low-hanging branches of a willow acacia. The largest tree in the cemetery, it was probably planted around the same time as the markers. Now, acacia branches and wooden crosses have begun to fall into each other until, at some near point in the future, the markers will be indistinguishable from the tree. But even here, the crosses are surrounded by tea lights and pebbles shaped into crosses.

How different from our own cemeteries. Mount Hope Cemetery and Hollywood Cemetery are perhaps more elegant, and the monuments are certainly grander in materials and scale; but they are comparatively restrained and solitary affairs. It is impossible to find a lonely grave at Guadalupe. The dead are invited to join the living, are welcomed and regularly interacted with; and because of that, it seems to me, they respond in kind.

Jim and I circle back toward the entrance, still drowsy from lunch. The burritos at Rosita's Place were massive, the chips and salsa endless. We had split a Negra Modelo beer before prying ourselves from the booth and driving east from Phoenix to the little cemetery. Now we head back to the car to continue our trip east. My husband spent the best years of his childhood in Tucson and wants to show me a hidden canyon and a spectacular swath of desert plants.



It is impossible to find a lonely grave at Guadalupe. The dead are invited to join the living, are welcomed and regularly interacted with. ☹☹

From morning to night on the Day of the Dead, cemeteries often are filled with the sounds of music, laughter and prayer honoring loved ones who have died.

We follow Route 60 east as it bends south, the Superstition Mountains coming into view. Saguaros rise like an army of green men. Every so often, Jim spies a view and we pull over and explore. To me the desert is desolate and foreboding. Where Jim sees dramatic cliffs and cacti-covered ridges, I see the possibility of rattlesnakes and scorpions. But just as Jim withstood the cemetery for me, I follow him through the desert. That is how I notice a low shrub awash in flowers.

“Look at that,” I say, staring into the mass of purplish blossoms.

I shouldn’t have been surprised. Like the little cemetery in Guadalupe, signs of life spring up in the most unexpected places. In Albuquerque last year, I had hopped onto the median for a better view of the parade until my skin began to burn and I pushed back through the crowded sidewalk and settled under a cottonwood tree. I looked up and into the yellowing leaves. The trees were going gold all over the city, as if throwing their own autumnal parade. It was everywhere, summer’s override end and winter’s chilly approach. Beauty and death demanded equal time, it seemed, in the glorious season of transformation.

An Ofrenda for the Living

My brother’s life was incredibly hard. When he died, the largest part of my grief was that the possibility for healing seemed to have passed. But the heartfelt *ofrendas* in Guadalupe and the parade of beautiful skeletons of Albuquerque taught me otherwise. When I gathered with my sisters this past spring to remember Johnny, I was surprised to hear my voice addressing him directly to thank him for all he had given us in life and in death. In fact, his loss had brought us closer. We were more tender with each

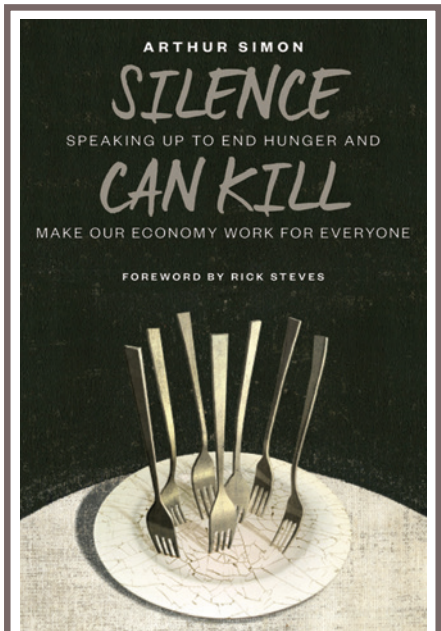
other, I noticed, more appreciative and patient. It was the first time I had spoken so openly to my brother in years.

Later, I placed the photo of him as a scrappy kid in a frame and surrounded it with other keepsakes: a tiny retablo of St. Anthony from Albuquerque, a piece of sea glass from Lake Ontario, a railroad spike that reminds me of the adventurous boy he once was. I set flowers beside the photograph and lit a candle. I did this for Johnny, as a sort of prayer of love and remembrance, but also as a prayer of thanksgiving because I had learned that he was still with me. Our relationship had not ended. The possibility for healing had not passed.

Darkness and light are but one, the psalmist tells us. Our lives are filled with both. Sugar and skulls. Flowers and dust. Love and loss. You cannot embrace one without allowing the other. This is what the Day of the Dead so powerfully illustrates. While families throughout Central America, Mexico and increasingly the United States visit cemeteries and build magnificent *ofrendas* for their deceased loved ones, Día de Los Muertos provides an offering to the living as well. Its traditions express a vital faith in human resurrection and communion with God and celebrate the continued possibility for hope, love and connection—even as the body returns to dust.

Alleluia, alleluia, the holiday jubilantly proclaims. *Life has not ended, only changed.*

Sonja Livingston’s *latest book*, *The Virgin of Prince Street: Expeditions Into Devotion*, describes a series of journeys that explore tradition within a swiftly changing personal and religious landscape. She is an associate professor of English at Virginia Commonwealth University.



Eerdmans Publishing, July 2019
Paperback, 300 pages

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TILL DEATH DO US PART?

Standing by my marriage vows came at a cost

By Beverly Willett

Two hundred and twenty-five years ago, on July 17, 1794, 16 Carmelite nuns were executed in Paris during Robespierre's Reign of Terror and the crusade to rid France of Catholicism. These martyrs chose the guillotine over renouncing their vows. I first learned of them at a performance of Francis Poulenc's modern opera, *Dialogues des Carmélites*. As I watched the story of these brave 18th-century women unfold on stage, I felt their strength under pressure pulse through me.


It was noon on a Saturday in May 2019 at the Metropolitan Opera in New York, but on stage it is 1789, the start of the French Revolution. Frightened by an angry mob, Blanche, the daughter of an aristocratic family, flees to a convent in Compiègne, France, where she struggles to accept a calling to religious life. Revolutionaries eventually close the convent and strip the nuns of their habits. But a group of them continue observing their religious life in se-

cret. They are discovered, imprisoned, swiftly found guilty on trumped-up charges of hiding arms and are sentenced to death.

In the final scene—set in July 17, 1794—they proceed single file up a cross-shaped ramp, hands clasped in prayer, unwavering, singing the “Salve Regina” until the sound of the guillotine’s blade removes their voices from the chorus one by one. Blanche, who has been burdened by her fear of death and of making a full commitment to her life’s calling, steps out of the shadows and joins her sisters.

While composing the opera, Poulenc became so obsessed with the story that he felt he had actually known these women. In them he had also found a mirror to his own experience in the accidental death of a friend who had been decapitated.

The opera triggered an uncanny feeling of kinship in me, too—not that my hardships could ever equate with those of



the nuns or the composer. Still, we tend to filter the tragedy of others through our personal experience. It is what enables us to identify with them and cultivate compassion.

Crying softly in my seat, I recalled a day 14 years before in a Brooklyn courtroom. The nuns' decision to remain steadfast to their vows called to mind my determination not to turn my back on mine.

In 2003 my husband sued me for divorce and custody of our children. He was having an affair. New York State had not yet adopted no-fault divorce, so he had to prove I had committed some legal wrong. Given his affair, I had the grounds, not he. But I could not imagine suing my own husband, and I wanted to save my marriage and family. My husband sued me instead.

For years, judges and lawyers pressured me to accept the divorce, warning me they held my future in their hands.

Every time I was called to court, I struggled to be strong and silently recited Psalm 23 over and over.

On June 6, 2005, I was summoned to the witness stand, raised my right hand and was sworn in. I had been given many opportunities to retreat, right down to the morning of trial, when the lawyers scurried in and out of the judge's chambers, exchanging settlement proposals. For two and a half years judges and lawyers had been trying to silence me, wear me down so I would accept the divorce with-

out a murmur. One judge even encouraged me to move on with a new partner, as my husband had done. "No," I told my lawyer as we entered the courtroom that day.

By then I had probably been in a dozen different courtrooms. They all looked pretty much the same, but it was the first time I had noticed the small black placard on the wall behind the judge's bench. It read, "In God We Trust."

"Please state your name for the record," the court clerk said. And so it began, the call to remain faithful to my own vows in a moment of deepest foreboding. It would be years before I converted to Catholicism. I had been raised Southern Baptist; and my grandfather, a Southern Baptist minister, had united me and my husband, a nonpracticing Jewish man, in holy matrimony. I had gone on to study Buddhism for a decade, eventually joining a nearby Episcopal Church with my children. None of these faiths considered marriage to be a sacrament the way the Catholic Church did, and yet

I had intuitively always believed marriage to be a sacred undertaking and a lifelong commitment. The trials I faced during my marriage had provided many occasions for me to run, but I had remained.

I had heard my grandfather preach from the pulpit about the love between Christ and his church, the bridegroom and the bride, and the New Testament's comparison of the human union to the celestial one. My grandfather pronounced us husband and wife, but God had joined us.

A year after my testimony, the judge dismissed my husband's petition for divorce. I had stood my ground and won. But my husband simply moved to New Jersey where the law permitted no-fault divorce, that is, divorce without my consent. We eventually divorced.

At the outset, my attorney had warned me that family courts were not marriage- or family-friendly. Their purpose was to effectuate the dismantling of marriages, he said, not to offer support or try to save them. I would not listen. Opposing their agenda came at a considerable financial and emotional cost.

Since then, I have written about divorce and advocated for reform. I have met many other women—and men—who have had similar experiences. We have been shamed and ridiculed, called out in the press and in private. "Idiot," "psycho" and "insane" are just some of the names I have been called. One reader criticized my work as an attempt to "legislate morality," comparing my view to that of "the Catholic Church circa 1732." Some say I have brought suffering on myself by standing up for the promises I made at the altar. In a sense that is true. But the alternative would have been to betray myself.

When did "martyr" become such a dirty word in our culture anyway? And isn't there a difference between inviting pain for the thrill of it and the willingness to take it on for a greater purpose? The Carmelites embraced it and paid the supreme price for doing so. Ten days after they were executed, the Reign of Terror ended.

Two hundred and twenty-five years later their legacy lives on in every woman and man who has ever opposed injustice. By setting the barometer at the highest level, these women have inspired those coming after them to drink from their own well of fortitude. In turn, when they stand, when we stand, we continue paving the road for those who come after us.

Beverly Willett, of Savannah, Ga., is the author of the recently released memoir *Disassembly Required: A Memoir of Midlife Resurrection*. She was received into the Catholic Church in December 2018.

Malcolm Gladwell wants to think like a Jesuit

Edited by Kevin Jackson

Malcolm Gladwell is a staff writer for The New Yorker, the author of several best-selling books and the host of the podcast “Revisionist History.” In a three-part series on the podcast, he takes a deep dive into the philosophical tradition of St. Ignatius Loyola, exploring the unexpected ways it can be applied today. Mr. Gladwell recently joined Ashley McKinless, Olga Segura and Zac Davis, the hosts of “Jesuitical,” a podcast for young Catholics produced by America Media, for a conversation about his experience thinking like a Jesuit. This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

What got you interested in the Jesuits?

I remember running across some references to the revival of casuistry in the field of medical ethics and thinking that was really interesting. And then I just did some reading on it. I think that is how it started. But my method of coming up with ideas is very chaotic.

You talk about the fact that we are very bad at figuring out novel problems, and you think that the way that Jesuits think about problems—a way of thinking called casuistry—could help us today. What is casuistry?

Casuistry is a method of moral reasoning pioneered by Jesuit thinkers, beginning with St. Ignatius 500 years ago, which proceeds on a case-by-case basis, which says that as opposed to approaching a problem with a set of broad principles, one should approach a problem on its own. Start with the specifics and then move from the specifics to a more general understanding. So it’s a way of considering new kinds of problems on their own merits.

And this is in contrast to...?

Normally one would assume that an intellectual approach to something begins with a set of principles, with a set of general rules or a philosophy that guide the way one investigates the problem at hand. But, for example, in the medical context—where casuistry in recent years has come back into vogue—casuistry means that you don’t approach a patient with a set of principles, such as “I am interested in supporting this patient’s autonomy” or “I am interested in respecting this patient’s privacy.” Instead, before I pursue any of those general goals, I am going to find out exactly what is going on in the life and heart and mind of

the patient, because maybe those general principles won’t help you at all. It’s all about understanding the nature of the problem that I am facing.

You interviewed our colleague, James Martin, S.J., on your podcast. What made you interested in him, and where did you see him using casuistry?

I give this example in my first podcast [in the series]: He was applying it to the way the church approaches the gay and lesbian community. He told me the story of how he was concerned after the Pulse nightclub shooting in Orlando that the church leadership had not responded appropriately. And he used a very casuistical argument, I thought, to explain why the church could be far more welcoming to that particular community, even though there is an explicit teaching of the church that is not necessarily entirely open to that community.

So he was asking: What do you do with a group of people who are Catholics but might fall afoul of certain teachings of the church? And by using a casuistical argument, he said there is a very clear moral direction we can take here, where we can reach out to and console this community without in any way contradicting our position within church teaching. I thought it was a very— what’s the right word? He was very clever, but it was more than clever. It was using cleverness as a route to a morally profound conclusion.

And that is an effort to be pastoral, right?

It was, and I loved that. I just thought there was a kind of beautiful illustration of how we can reach out to people with whom we may have differences and still meet them face to face.



Jesuits are often disliked or mistrusted for this way of proceeding. Why do you think that is? Are there risks in using this type of moral reasoning?

Casuistry got a bad name in the 17th century. There was a feeling among some Catholic theologians that people were taking this kind of reasoning too far. If you are just going to use it to be cynical and clever, casuistry can be used to justify nearly anything. So like any kind of moral reasoning, it can be abused.

It does require some degree of moral rigor on the part of the person practicing it. If you are going to say, “Let’s set our general principles aside and proceed on a case-by-case basis,” that is calling for a certain kind of responsibility on the part of the moral practitioner.

One thing that struck me in the podcast is a very stark line you draw between casuistry and principles. I think most Jesuit priests would say they do have fundamental principles that they keep and are not ready to disregard just because it does not work in some case studies.

The key thing is not that you are abandoning your principles. It is the order in which you call your principles into your reasoning process. Instead of starting with your principles and then looking at the case in front of you, you look at your case in front of you and then proceed to your principles. Before I draw any general conclusion about the

problem in front of me, I need to interrogate the problem, listen to the person, descend into the particular.

You described yourself as a “wannabe” Catholic. Did your research into the Jesuits change your perception of the church or your own religious perspective?

I am favorably disposed toward institutionalized religion. I come from a very religious background, and I have been a little alarmed recently in that I feel like some of the struggles that the church has gone through with various scandals have permitted people to engage in what I think is fairly called anti-Catholic bigotry. Or people have dismissed the church or reduced the church to this single issue and have forgotten that the Catholic Church is a very large, long-lived, multifaceted institution, and anything that big is going to have problems from time to time. But that does not cancel all the good that it does. So I thought it was a useful exercise in reminding people that this is a large and wonderful and powerful church, and we shouldn’t focus solely on the particular problem the church is going through now.

Kevin Jackson is a Joseph A. O’Hare, S.J., fellow at America Media.

What Angels Can Teach Us About Being Human

By Margaret Tucker

Angels amaze and dismay us, and for good reason: They are intelligent, powerful, immortal and invisible. You could walk through one and not even know it. You could talk to one and have no idea who or what you had just met. There is a slippery, shape-shifting quality to angels that fascinated the authors of the Scriptures. Think of the three mysterious visitors to Abraham's tent in Genesis or the strange and fable-like Book of Tobit, in which the

angel Raphael disguises himself as a man in order to rescue a good family that has fallen on hard times.

The author of Tobit, in particular, established a key fact about angels that would later be taken up by Christian theologians and—much later—by directors and writers of feature films in the 20th century. Angels, we learn in Tobit, do not have bodies. Whatever they seem to do with their bodies is an illusion. “Even though you saw me eat

and drink, I did not eat or drink anything; what you were seeing was a vision,” explains Raphael after revealing his true identity to Tobias, Tobit's son (Tob 12:18).

But do angels ever imagine what it might be like to have a body or wish they could live in the world as humans do? In Wim Wenders's film “Wings of Desire” (1987), the protagonist, an angel named Damiel, ruefully describes an angel's bodyless existence as “pre-



In Wim Wenders's film "Wings of Desire," the protagonist, an angel named Damiel (Bruno Ganz), is tired of spending eternity as a pure spirit.

Alamy


tense." He and another angel, Cassiel, are sitting in a new car on a display room floor, invisible to passersby, engaging in one of the many existential discussions that drive the dialogue of the film. "Every time we participated, it was a pretense," Damiel says. "Wrestling with one of them and allowing a hip to be put out in pretense, catching a fish in pretense, in pretense sitting at tables, drinking and eating in pretense. Having lambs roasted and wine

served in the tents out there in the desert, only pretense."

Damiel is tired of pretense, tired of spending eternity as a pure spirit. He wants to experience the world in a body, as a human—wants to love the beautiful trapeze artist at the local circus who has captivated him with her exquisite yet uncertain grace. "Wings of Desire" skillfully plays on the tensions between pretense and experience, spirit and body as it follows

Damiel and Cassiel through the air and streets.

If the premise of "Wings of Desire" sounds vaguely familiar, that is because it inspired the 1998 film "City of Angels," in which Nicholas Cage plays an angel who casts aside his immortality for the sake of Meg Ryan. Though "Wings of Desire" includes a love story, it is far less concerned with romance than its descendant. It looks at humans through the eyes of angels,



One can trace a fairly direct line from ‘Wings of Desire’ back to St. Thomas Aquinas, who found angels to be a rich subject of speculation.

bringing to our attention the ephemeral yet effulgent sensations, sights and sounds that only we can fully perceive. What is more, it does so with a keen, Catholic sensibility, upholding the value of bodily existence even in the midst of pain and shadows. As the worth and parameters of human life increasingly come to dominate our public discourse, “Wings of Desire” reminds us what a gift it is to breathe.

The foreign-language film is set in a divided Berlin during the Cold War. World War II still scars the landscape: Cassiel follows an old man who wanders through an empty, muddy field and wonders if this is where Potsdamer Platz once stood. Daniel and Cassiel wear long black trench coats and scarves, perhaps reflecting the broader aesthetic of the somber, postmodern city they have been set to patrol.

The improbable grouping of lead actors makes this film a poignant delight. Daniel is portrayed by the re-

cently deceased Swiss actor Bruno Ganz, best known to American audiences for his harrowing depiction of Adolph Hitler in the 2004 film “Downfall.” Peter Falk, of “Columbo” and “The Princess Bride” (1987), appears as himself—an actor supposedly making a film about Nazi Germany in Berlin—and lightens the production with his characteristic “Aw shucks” demeanor. Cassiel, Daniel’s friend, is played by Otto Sander, formerly a jaded submarine captain in “Das Boot” (1981).

Critics have applauded “Wings of Desire” for its portrayal of the wonders of everyday life: for the way it casts a luminous, mysterious glow on acts as simple as holding a cup of warm coffee. “You’re seduced into the spell of this movie,” wrote Roger Ebert in a four-star review in 1998. “It moves slowly, but you don’t grow impatient, because there is no plot to speak of, and so you don’t fret that it should

move on to its next predictable stage. It is about being, not doing.”

It is easy to assume that the “spell” of the film is largely secular. Daniel and Cassiel rarely allude to God and do not convey much love or respect for him when they do. Indeed, the arc of the film—an angel rejecting his nature in pursuit of forbidden knowledge—is, essentially, a story of sin. After all, there are no good “fallen angels” in the Christian tradition, no matter how sympathetic Daniel seems.

The film’s symbolic use of color contributes to a secular interpretation. Scenes registering the point of view of the angels are shot in black and white; scenes capturing the human perspective are shot in color. This can create the impression that Daniel has bettered his lot by becoming a man.

Yet, as Daniel’s allusion to Tobit makes clear—“eating and drinking in pretense”—“Wings of Desire” also deeply engages with a Catholic theology of angels. Wenders, the director, was raised Catholic and now describes himself as an “ecumenical Christian”; he directed last year’s critically acclaimed “Pope Francis: A Man of His Word.” Tapping into a centuries-old Catholic tradition, Wenders uses the relationship between angels and humans in “Wings of Desire” to illustrate certain truths about our two kinds and about the world.

One can trace a fairly direct line from “Wings of Desire” back to St. Thomas Aquinas, who found angels to be a rich subject of analysis and speculation in the *Summa Theologiae*. He moves through a series of questions about the substance and nature of an-



The Ronald Grant Archive

The actor Peter Falk appears as himself in "Wings of Desire."

gels—"Whether an angel is altogether incorporeal?" "Do angels have bodies naturally united to them?"—and it becomes clear that a discussion about angels is also, to some extent, a discussion about humans. The body and what it means to have a body quickly emerge as central points of contention in Aquinas's text.

We probably do not need Thomas Aquinas to tell us that we exist in bodies. What is interesting are the reasons why he concentrates on this fact. Though he identifies human souls and angels as "incorporeal" or "intellectual substances," Aquinas observes

that the human soul must be housed in a body because "it is imperfect and exists potentially in the genus of intellectual substances, not having the fullness of knowledge in its own nature, but acquiring it from sensible things through the bodily senses." In other words, there are limitations to the human soul, such that it requires a body to take in necessary information from its surroundings.

In order to argue that angels do not need bodies and do not have them, Aquinas goes on to claim that angels must not have bodies because we, as humans, do. "Now whenever we find

something imperfect in any genus we must presuppose something perfect in that genus," he says. "Therefore in the intellectual nature there are some perfectly intellectual substances which do not need to acquire knowledge from sensible things." Human souls, as imperfect examples of "intellectual substances," point the way to angels—perfect, disembodied intellects.

Aquinas uses human nature and the human body as a way to envision or access angels. An underlying comparison between body and spirit runs throughout his commentary, such that humans and angels emerge as some-

thing like foils to one another in a theological drama. Humans use their bodies to take in and process information—to sense. Angels do not have bodies, and when they appear to have bodies, they do not use them in the same way humans do. Angels, as pure intelligence, are infinite. The bodies of humans are, as Aquinas puts it, “limited to ‘here’ and ‘now.’”

It is this “now” that Damiel is so desperate to experience. His dialogue often reflects Thomistic theology, even as his character chafes against it. “It’s wonderful to live as spirit and testify for all eternity to only what is spiritual in people’s minds,” he says to Cassiel as they sit in the car in the showroom. “But sometimes I get fed up with this spiritual existence. I don’t want to always hover above. I’d rather feel a weight within, casting off this boundless freedom and tying me to the earth. At every step, every gust of wind, I’d like to be able to say, ‘now,’ and ‘now’ and ‘now.’”

“Wings of Desire” casts human beings as creatures of “now,” of sensation, true heirs to all the wonders of the world. We can see that Damiel understands the immediacy of human experience when he comforts a man injured in a motorcycle wreck, not by giving any words of reassurance but simply by naming places and things. “The Southern Cross...the Far East...the Great North...the Wild West...the Great Bear Lake,” he intones, until the man, roused from his pain, takes over the chant, clearly reminded of all that is worth living for: “The morning light. The eyes of a child. The spots from the first drops of rain. The sun. Bread and wine. Hopscotch. Easter Sunday. Veins of leaves. The billowing grass. The colors of stones.”

If Aquinas often moves from the human and familiar to the angelic, “Wings of Desire” moves from the angelic to the human. Wenders’s film imagines how angels might feel about humans, making us strange to ourselves. We learn that Damiel and Cassiel have inhabited since time began the space that is now the city of Berlin and witnessed the first arrival of man from Africa. “Remember how one morning, out of the savannah, his forehead smeared with grass, the biped appeared, our long-awaited likeness?” says Cassiel. “Its first word was a shout. Was it ‘ah,’ or ‘oh,’ or merely a groan?”

In picturing humans as “bipeds” who are “smeared with grass,” “Wings of Desire” captures our earthiness, our sheer animality, in comparison with the eternal intellect of angels. This vision is at once degrading and uplifting—the angels clearly admire the vitality of creatures that could announce themselves with such full-throated gusto.

“Wings of Desire” is not naïve and seldom shows us the beauty that its chief characters purport to find in the world. We see cluttered, unlovely apartments, trash, disorder. A man muses about how he never loved his mother; parents mull over conflicts with their children. “My God, what will become of that boy? Music’s all he’s got in his head,” thinks a father, mentally wringing his hands. These are the thoughts that Damiel and Cassiel listen to as they “testify for all eternity to only what is spiritual in people’s minds.” Hearing them, we wonder why Damiel would choose to tie himself to this world.

Yet the film leaves us with the distinct impression that life is precious

and not to be taken for granted. That much becomes apparent when Cassiel tries to soothe a man on the brink of jumping to his death from a roof, laying a hand on him to disrupt his manic train of thoughts. But the man drops out of sight over the edge of the building anyway, and Cassiel lets out a sudden roar of anguish—“Nein!”—that is the single loudest sound in the film. This death is a tragedy, and we sense that Cassiel is disturbed and grieved as he flies through the city to the discordant noise of strings.

Ultimately, “Wings of Desire” seems to reflect a sacramental view of the world, one in which grace abounds in the barely registered miracle of being alive. By the end of the film, one is almost tempted to pity angels for what they lack—for their inability to grasp the richness of the “now.” To do so, however, would be to misinterpret the relationship described by Aquinas and dramatized by Wenders. Angels and humans may seem to be opposites, but they are actually complementary. Taken together, they capture the fullness of the divine vision, prefiguring the union of heaven and earth.

Margaret Tucker is a writer based in St. Louis. She recently completed doctoral studies in English literature; her dissertation was on the role of Catholicism in the rise of the English novel.

Respiration

By Mary Callistas

Dusk, 15 April

The woman lies down lately expired
on her back—but her back is gone—
on her stomach—but her stomach is empty—
and watches believingly the dust of her own bones
settle on her skin,
sweet-musted and inspired.
Somewhere in the touch is fire.

In the back of her head the rigor of
hot blood leaps retina-wise—
but rubs her eyes
with sheets of stars
and murmurs. She is tired.

She hears the cries through the soil:
galaxies of the hungry on the riverbank
calling, calling
in a mother tongue petrified between her teeth—
get up, phoenix, sings the choir,
ave, ave,
ave—hail—

hail. Like the rain missing her skin
and hitting her bones and gathering in.

She lets a sigh long and gothic
rustle her pools and indoor mires,
and whether now she sleeps toward birth
or corpsetry—*that*, she thinks,
was *never up to me*—and she splays her hands
in the blue of her natal ashes.

Dawn, April 21

There were women this morning
picking flowers in the field—
perspiring—for you,
soaking their candlewhite fingers in dew,
and you dreamt through it.

They arrived on aspiring knees
to shake you,
to extricate you from the evening trance
you tasted and savored,
sleeping in the middle of the street—

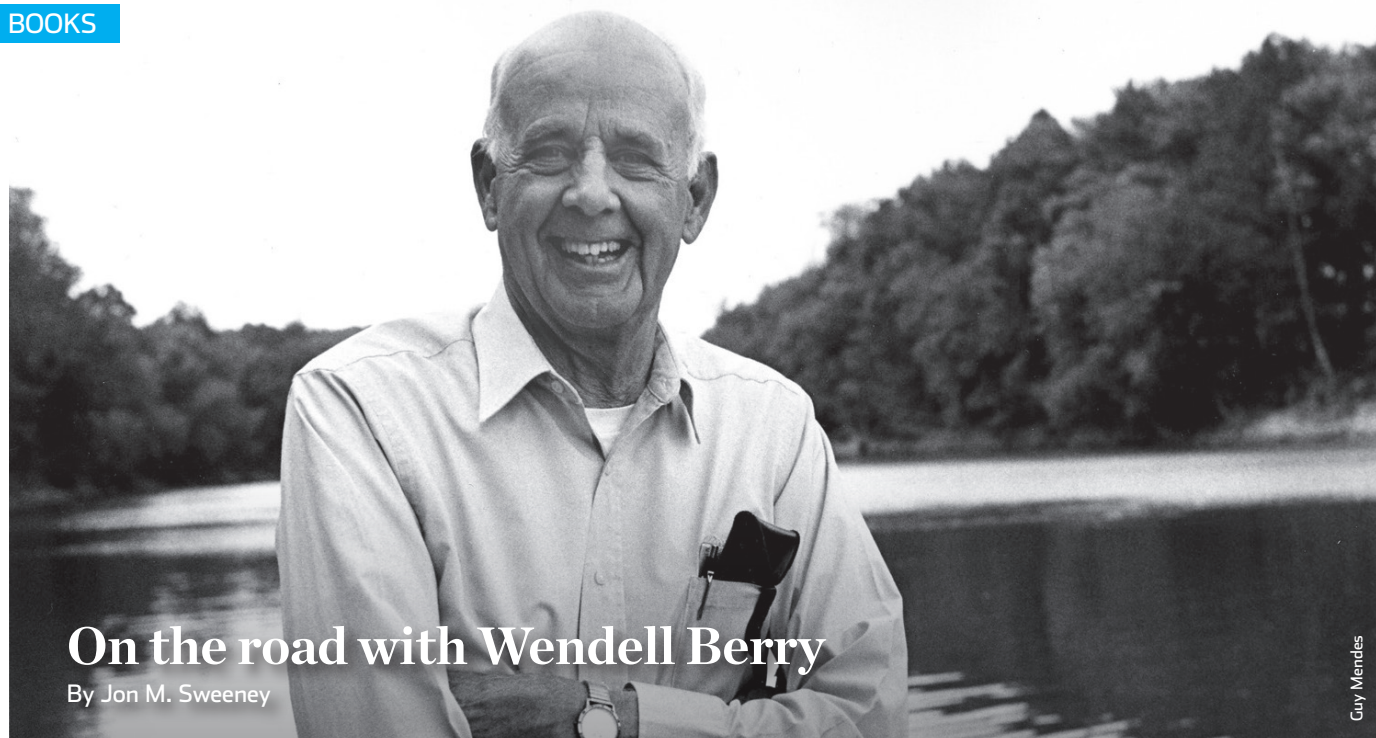
even as cars squawked
and trains rocked the underworld
and light polluted its way between
your sheets of skin
and fever tore you open—

you let it tear you open.
Roll back the stones, you said,
This year I'll feel the light of the tomb
on my own bones the way it shone
on the crypt bleached down to the marrow.

On the river they sang in sorrow.

But I saw the way you shivered
gargoyle-grinning, joy-conspiring,
when Easter sank in your soul
and slipped to calm.
Wake up, they said,
He isn't here. You are bleeding,
you are burning, Notre Dame.

Mary Callistas is a Southern-born Catholic poet who lives and writes in Boston.



On the road with Wendell Berry

By Jon M. Sweeney

Guy Mendes



What I Stand On
The Collected Essays
of Wendell
Berry 1969-2017
Ed. by Jack
Shoemaker
The Library of America
1,702 pg (two
volumes) \$75

I fell in with Wendell Berry early. At 16, I started visiting an independent bookstore on the Fox River in Chicago's west suburbs near my high school. I spent many afternoons there, and probably too much of the money I was making working on weekends. They would allow me to stay for hours: crouching to investigate, sitting to read, asking questions. The bookseller was a smart, indulgent woman. She observed my interests and remembered my patterns. My tastes were rapidly evolving from only the religious into modern literature, ecology, poetry and philosophy. Soon I learned that there were implicitly

religious people who wrote explicitly about these wider matters.

One day, my bookselling mentor put two books by Wendell Berry in my hands: *The Wheel* (a book of poems) and *Recollected Essays*. Right away I noticed their physical uniqueness: They were paperbacks with French flaps; that was new to me. Berry's longtime publisher is Jack Shoemaker, editor of the volumes under review. In the 1980s, Shoemaker was running North Point Press, which was known for using the paperback French flaps on poetry, novels and essays, and was publishing some of the most interesting writers of the 20th century, including M. F. K. Fisher, Jean Giono and Hugh Kenner. But I digress. She said to me, "I think you should get to know this author." I bought *The Wheel* that day, and came back with caddying money for the essays one week later.

I read those books over and over, and gave copies to friends. Wendell Berry became one of *those* authors in my life. Perhaps you know what I

mean: He was walking a road that drew me, and he was articulating the road that I already sensed I was walking on. I believe it was Berry who taught me to seek solitude, to find meaning in wild places and to know the benefits of being still and small. I have not always followed his advice, but I think my life has been richer when I have.

I have read all of Wendell Berry's more than 80 books, and half of those I have read several times. I like the novels; I love the poetry, particularly the "Sabbath poems" that he has written for years on Sundays; but most of all, I love the essays.

There is always movement in Wendell Berry's sentences. He writes about what he has experienced, what he has learned, and always with humility for what he does not know. The natural world is his primary teacher: its rhythms, its largesse, its mysteries. And in the essays, the natural world often reflects how change in humans is also natural, inexplicable and possible. I think this is what many who love

The natural world is Wendell Berry's primary teacher:
its rhythms, its largesse, its mysteries.

his writing appreciate most about Berry, whether they realize it or not. For his Christian readers, this becomes an expansion of what we understand as conversion.

At the time of my introduction to Berry's essays, I was reading William Wordsworth in school and lines from "Tintern Abbey" must have been in my psyche:

*...a wild secluded scene impress
Thoughts of more deep seclusion*

One experiences this again and again in Berry: a turning toward reflection that is only born apart from worldly things. I think Berry's readers understand their desperate need for this, for places that might engender it, and for a way of life that supports it.

For Berry, the world is not one in which spirit and matter are at war with each other. Our bad decisions and habits are the reason for this. For Berry, matter (the natural world) is good: It is what we have done to the world that turns things bad. "We are living even now among punishments and ruins," Berry wrote in "A Few Words in Favor of Edward Abbey" (one of his heroes), an essay that did not make the cut in this edited collection.

In all of his essays, Berry does not so much find simple pleasures in life as find that pleasure is simple. He frequently questions society's attempts to improve things, modernize or make ways of living more efficient. Those words—*improve*, *modernize*, *efficient*—might as well be in quotation marks whenever they appear in a Berry essay. He doubts them con-

sistently. In "The Way of Ignorance" (Vol. 2) he defines "arrogant ignorance" as "willingness to work on too big a scale." When life is lived more simply, those living it are apt to be more joyful, peaceful and loving, with basic needs satisfied and in harmony with the land and its creatures.

Provocatively, he writes, "Novelty is a new kind of loneliness" in an essay, "Healing," that is not included here. Specifically, he writes (among hundreds of possible examples) in "Horse-drawn Tools" (Vol. 1) that every machine or instrument designed for progress or increased efficiency "should be adapted to us [not the other way]—to serve our human needs." This is exactly the conversation we are finally beginning to have about mobile phones and how they are ruining us.

I recall in college using Berry's ideas to argue with adults giving me advice on what to do with my life. (We do this to our elders: quote our favorite authors to dismantle the elders' assumptions!) I was being advised to think big and imagine how I might do great things with my life. I was reading Berry at the time, and his vision for what was great and good was the opposite of big. He wrote about the values of staying put (he had left a teaching position at New York University to return to the family farm), nurturing a small piece of earth with the passion and attention most people bring only to a career, and opting out of what the world calls progress.

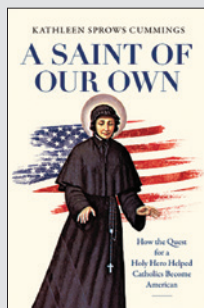
"I want to live a small life. By living small and purposefully, I think I can do the most good," I would say. I probably sounded like Henry David Thoreau,

but it was Wendell Berry I was parroting. In these ways he sounds quite conservative, and in the early 1970s, when his children's generation were hippies, he *was* conservative, poking fun at the new conformism. He wrote in an essay, "Think Little" (Vol. 1), in 1972: "Individualism is going around these days in uniform, handing out the party line on individualism." Then he basically predicted that hippies would become baby boomers: "Our model citizen is a sophisticate who before puberty understands how to produce a baby, but who at the age of thirty will not know how to produce a potato."

Those are really just two themes in Berry's work, and these volumes are a rich retrospective. A chronology of the author's life and explanatory notes enrich both volumes. There is also much here on the value of hard work, the meaning of human dignity, the scar of racism in the United States, buying local and eating local. In fact, it is Wendell Berry who first said, "Eating is an agricultural act" ("The Pleasures of Eating," Vol. 1).

He is not always right. Any essayist worth reading will anger and annoy you from time to time. Berry can be cranky. You will probably find paragraphs and essays in this collection of 1,700 pages to skip over, but not many. His wisdom, and his call to better habits, is too essential. To ignore Wendell Berry is like trying to ignore your grandmother: You just can't.

Jon M. Sweeney is the author of *St. Francis of Assisi, with a foreword by Richard Rohr*, new from *St. Martin's Press*.



A Saint of Our Own
How the Quest for a Holy Hero Helped Catholics Become American
By Kathleen Sprows Cummings
University of North Carolina Press
336p \$28

Exceptional and ordinary

The French writer Léon Bloy once famously remarked that the only tragedy in life is to not have been a saint. But most of us will not become saints, at least not in the formal sense. As Kathleen Sprows Cummings shows in her study of modern saint-making, *A Saint of Our Own*, canonization is about much more than personal sanctity. Although a superabundance of virtue and holiness may be a prerequisite, necessary but insufficient, sainthood is in many ways a practical enterprise that reflects Catholicism's contemporary sense of self in the world.

Saints, Catholics learn from a very young age—through both formal catechism and the osmosis of family and parish traditions—are simultaneously exceptional and ordinary: ideals of holiness that awe us, inspire us toward deeper piety and convict us in our moral finitude. They are also thaumaturgical protectors who miraculously cure us of terminal illnesses, keep our loved ones safe during times of war and help us find stuff. Well, technically they're not the ones who do the healing, but it sure feels like it. They are also essentially mascots of particular causes, places and nations. And as such, they are also subject to ecclesiastical politics.

As Cummings shows in intricate detail, canonization is painstaking work that requires labor, money, miracles, investigations and no small amount of luck. In the United States, Catholic saints have largely been reflections of what bishops believed to be contemporary ideals of holiness, which evolved over the course of time, in no small part because of the shifting cultural terrain of Catholicism's relationship to mainstream Protestantism. Kateri Tekakwitha, Elizabeth Ann Seton, John Neumann, Junípero Serra—all are saints whose time came years after their formal causes were established, as their model of virtue matched up with prevailing winds of U.S. Catholic identity.

In Golden, Colo., sits a shrine to St. Frances Xavier Cabrini, a Gilded Age, Italian-born, immigrant missionary who founded the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Cummings records Cabrini's remarkable life and cause, which reached its peak with her canonization in 1946 by Pope Pius XI. A devotional cult has developed around Cabrini to match that of more iconic European counterparts like Sts. Thérèse, Francis, Patrick and Joan—to say nothing of the Blessed Mother.

As Cummings notes, our future saints, some of whom have already passed beyond the veil, will disclose to us as much about ourselves and our church as they will about their own heroic virtue.

Jack Downey is the author of *The Bread of the Strong: Lacouturisme and the Folly of the Cross, 1910-1985* (Fordham University Press).



Dominicana
By Angie Cruz
Flatiron Books
336p \$26.99

Longing for home

Dominicana, the new novel by Angie Cruz, tells the story of Ana Canción. At 15, Ana is married off to Juan Ruiz, a man twice her age. Marrying Ana into the Ruiz family, her mother believes, will help the Canción family financially. “This is important for us—your father especially because soon all our fruit trees will be barren,” her mother tells her. Before she departs for the United States, Mamá tells Ana that she must be a dutiful wife for Juan every day. “And whatever you do, stay strong.”

The couple moves to New York City and settles into the Washington Heights neighborhood of Manhattan. The city overwhelms Ana: “I feel ant small among all the skyscrapers,” she describes. She spends most of her time in their small apartment, where she is physically abused by Juan and eventually becomes pregnant.

When Juan returns to the Dominican Republic, he leaves Ana with his brother César. Ana is finally free to explore the world around her. She visits Coney Island, goes out dancing and begins an English as a Second Language course at a local Catholic Church. (In one of the novel's most evocative scenes, she steals a bag of wafers from the church.

Upon her return home, she eats the hosts, asking Jesus to “protect me from the inside.... I eat him until I’m full.... Jesus, bless my baby.”)

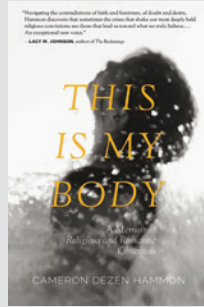
From Ana to Juan to César to Mamá, every character will feel familiar to Dominican readers, myself included. *Dominicana* describes the fear, anxiety and nostalgia immigrants feel when they first land here.

The novel also allows non-Dominican readers to understand how terrifying New York can be for immigrants, from the struggle to find work to the weather and transportation. It also showcases how much Dominicans—and other immigrant groups—sacrifice for the promise of a better life and the illusion of wealth.

Dominicana is for us, all the strong Dominicans living here, on the motherland, in both worlds. The novel demonstrates our resilience. Toward the end, Ana tells her mother how strong life in a new city has made her, “And that’s when Mamá’s cries come in, a tropical storm without warning, her wail with no top or bottom. Finally, she understands everything I have sacrificed, everything I have survived for her and for the family.”

Dominicana captures how our culture—like so many others—is built on the backs of women: women who clean, women who birth, who sacrifice. Women who survive.

Olga Segura, *associate editor*.
Twitter: @OlgaMSegura.



This Is My Body
A Memoir of
Religious and
Romantic Obsession
By Cameron Dezen
Hammon
Lookout
224p \$17.95

A woman of faith and feminism

The Russian feminist protest punk rock group Pussy Riot bellowed their “Punk Prayer” on the altar at the Cathedral of Christ the Savior in Moscow in early 2012, aware that the lyrics juxtaposed with the location would invigorate the fight against sexism prolific in patriarchal religious societies. But a majority of feminists—myself included—do not have the chutzpah to be a Pussy Riot and so must advocate for feminism in other ways. *This is My Body*, by Cameron Dezen Hammon, is a warning about how a feminist can fall prey to and rationalize the pervasiveness of misogyny, despite his or her best intentions.

Hammon opens her memoir with her baptism. Born in a New Jersey suburb to a Jewish father and a non-Jewish mother, she has a crisis of faith when she is pressured into having sex and subsequently contracts HPV. Her physician finds precancerous lesions, and she settles on becoming a Christian, not so much from internal reflection culminating in belief but because Christianity offered the best option for an afterlife. Hammon chooses the denomination that is readily available and starts her tumultuous relationship with evangelical Christianity.

Her autobiography wrestles

with the dichotomy between being a woman of faith and a woman of feminism, with the former forcing her to live as a shadow of the woman and artist she could be. After repeated attempts to become an ordained minister, her value is consistently diminished. Hammon eventually comes to the conclusion that “my female body was an issue, would always be an issue. I saw it clearly for the first, but definitely not the last, time.” She realizes that any success she would have in ministry would be attributed to her husband, a standard that is common among evangelical Christians and one that she subliminally encourages herself.

True to her musical roots, Hammon’s book reads like an album, with each chapter a song. This structure works both for and against her, as it allows the reader to have a neatly packaged cathartic experience that begins and ends with the chapter, but at times it disorients the reader in regard to the timeline of the series of events.

The book’s true power lies in Hammon’s awareness of her own moral weakness, and she willingly shares these regrets. Although the piece primarily focuses on the insidious nature of misogyny in many strands of Christianity, her work demands that we deeply reflect on our complacency—and more frighteningly, our inadvertent participation—in all matters of injustice.

E. M. Hill earned her undergraduate degree in English from Fordham University and is completing her post-baccalaureate studies in pre-medical sciences.

Slavery's poisonous legacy

By Rob Weinert-Kendt

In "Slave Play," Jeremy O. Harris posits that racism poisons our most intimate relationships. Pictured: Annie McNamara and Sullivan Jones.

Chattel slavery as it was practiced in the United States for centuries was not just an economic system but an organizing principle of American life, and as such, has proven hard to shake even a century and a half after Emancipation. It found its justification in the racist notion that people of African descent were genetically inferior, and while that hereditary slur was an evil lie, what has clearly been passed down through our generations is the stain of white supremacy. To our lasting shame, racism would seem to be in our metaphorical DNA.

It is not much of a stretch, then, for the playwright Jeremy O. Harris to posit, as he does in the sensational new "Slave Play," now on Broadway, that racism may poison our most intimate relationships as well. With disarming frankness, the play follows the attempts of three interracial couples to face and overcome their sexual dysfunction. First, we watch them enact an elaborate form of improvised costume play com-

prising slave-and-master sexual scenarios, only to have those break down into a group therapy session to "unpack" what we have just seen. It does not go well for them, or for the well-meaning academics running the experiment.

It is easy to see why the regimen these two earnest psychologists call, with a straight face, "Antebellum sexual performance therapy," backfires. Rather than purge the racist dynamics from these couples' relationships, it seems to be reinscribing them. As Jim (Paul Alexander Nolan), a white man who had half-heartedly embodied the role of an abusive master, puts it, "I feel like this whole thing is traumatizing my wife." He doesn't know the half of it, as it turns out, as his wife, Kaneisha (Joaquina Kalukango), ultimately sees through the whole enterprise to probe an even deeper historical wound.

As fodder for drama (and comedy), though, this half-baked therapy idea is gold, and Harris mines it with gleeful mastery. In the group session

that is the play's centerpiece, the couples turn on each other, at first reluctantly, then with explosive venom. No one emerges unscathed, not least the liberal academics versed in recondite jargon about gender and race.

Harris's play, though, appears to believe in its own kind of exorcism-by-trauma, as Kaneisha struggles to understand and explain her increasingly visceral distaste for Jim, a Brit. Though initially attracted to his non-American whiteness because it seemed unmarred by our national assumptions about race, she has begun to recognize this as a kind of denial, and she wants him to grasp this as well. The means by which he finally comes to see this—no spoilers here—feels both contrived and, within the play's sealed world, inevitable.

Indeed, while "Slave Play" is both razor-sharp and ruminative on the ways we see and feel race, even or especially in 2019, the play's take on sex feels reductive. It's not just that the



Matthew Murphy

opening tableaux veer close to porn but obviously can't go all the way, thus falling into an uncanny valley of simulated titillation; it's also that even when the couples talk about sex, they address it in purely instrumental terms—what turns them on and not, what will “work” better in the bedroom. This fault is hardly unique to this play, but it is symptomatic of a culture in which intimacy has been infected by many more pathogens than racism.

If, as a result, “Slave Play” ultimately feels closer to a stunt-like provocation than the cleansing catharsis it appears to want to be, it is

not for lack of excellence all around. Under Robert O'Hara's strong direction, the work of the first-rate acting ensemble has only deepened since the play's Off-Broadway run last year (only Kalukango is new to the cast).

There has been a fair amount of chatter about the controversy the play has stirred, particularly among some black audiences, and about how unlikely it is that it has made its way to Broadway. But “Slave Play” hardly feels out of place there. It may not be a home run, by my lights, but it is unmistakably a swing-for-the-fences effort. And it serves as a memorable calling card for Harris, a restless, unsparring, playfully serious voice we will be hearing from for a good long while, if we're lucky.

Rob Weinert-Kendt, an arts journalist and editor of *American Theatre* magazine, has written for *The New York Times* and *Time Out New York*.

Made in the U.S.A. (by Chinese)

In their Academy Award-winning “The Last Truck” (2009), Steven Bognar and Julia Reichert accompanied General Motors workers through the closing of the Moraine Assembly Plant near Dayton, Ohio. It was a frightening and heartbreaking account of the workers' precipitous fall from the stability of middle-class life because of forces utterly beyond their control. In “American Factory,” the filmmakers return to the scene: the same factory retooled and reopened by Fuyao, a Chinese auto glass manufacturer where thousands of workers (GM veterans among them) sign up hoping for another shot at the American dream.

The film offers a stunning degree of intimacy with workers and management through the startup of the factory. Fuyao's chairman, Cao Dewang, and the workers from China are eager to show that a Chinese factory can prosper in the United States. Eager U.S. workers are thrilled at the opportunity.

We meet several workers. Shawnea, who made \$29 an hour at GM, now works for \$12. Chastened by the loss of her home and car, she is thankful for the job but unable to provide for her children the way she once could. Jill, a forklift driver who after GM closed was reduced to living

in her sister's basement, is now able to rent a cheap apartment. Wong is a furnace supervisor whose two-year assignment keeps him away from his young family. Rob, an older worker, apprentices with Wong and is deeply appreciative of what he takes to be a personal sacrifice, “what they are doing for us.”

Setting up a precision production line is demanding. Hundreds of workers must learn complex skills on dangerous machinery that is still being calibrated. Friendships form and cultures clash. Managers complain of “fat fingers” and the workers' dislike of high temperatures.

“American Factory” tells an important story of one economically successful factory. But it is not quite a human success story. Wages remain low and the factory dangerous (a worker has since died in a workplace accident). Changing the lives of workers requires more than good storytelling. It demands difficult and finely tuned changes to our global economic system. As a film, “American Factory” is a profound success. We await a politics of equal competence.

Vincent Miller is the author of *Consuming Religion: Christian Faith and Practice in a Consumer Culture*.



“American Factory” is the first film distributed by the Obamas' Higher Ground Productions.

Netflix

Confirmed by Example

Readings: Wis 11:22-12:2, Ps 145, 2 Thes 1:11-2:2, Lk 19:1-10

Jesuits of an earlier generation learned the basics of the spiritual life from a book titled *The Practice of Christian and Religious Perfection*. After chapters reflecting on topics like “The Dangers of Vainglory,” the author offered illustrations from lives of the saints under the heading “The previous, confirmed by diverse examples.” Some of these examples were legendary or difficult to understand out of original context. Most of them, however, emphasized the important point that the Gospel was not a mythic ideal but rather an effective means of transformation.

This is Luke’s strategy in this Sunday’s Gospel passage. The story of Zacchaeus is the example that confirms the truth of last Sunday’s Gospel reading, the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector (Lk 18:9-14). Tax collectors in Israel were loathsome agents of a foreign power. Informants told them who had harvested a bumper crop or who had made a profitable exchange in the marketplace, and they then showed up to demand a percentage. Rome even allowed them to take taxes in kind from those who had no cash; such seizures could include the sale of a family’s children into slavery. By such means, even “honest” tax collectors grew both rich and hated.

Luke shows repeatedly that at least some tax collectors were conflicted about their duties. Many came out to hear the preaching first of John the Baptist (Lk 3:12) and then of Jesus (Lk 7:29; 15:1). Because they were so hated, pious Israelites avoided them and never reached out with an invitation to change their lives. Without any encouragement to change, it was easy for tax collectors to cling to what they knew—the accumulation of wealth, and the sense of power that went along with it.

In this Gospel reading, Luke shows the nature of real power. Jesus knew the Father’s love and shared it in unexpected places. Jesus reached out with a request for hospitality. That simple word of friendship was all Zacchaeus needed to undergo a complete transformation.

Luke symbolizes Zacchaeus’s conversion by revealing a change in his relationship to material possessions. C. S.

‘For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save what was lost.’ (Lk 19:10)

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

Are you attached to something that draws your attention from Christ?

Who in your world is ready to hear a different message?

What can you say to them?

Lewis once observed that the greatest sinners and greatest saints are made of the same stuff. Luke shows us something similar here. Zacchaeus had accumulated wealth with zeal. He even implies (though he carefully does not admit) that he may have defrauded one or more individuals in the course of his duties. Now, because of a kind gesture from Jesus, he turns that same zeal to the service of the Gospel.

Thus Luke makes it clear to his readers that the Gospel has an effect. The parables of Jesus, like the one about the Pharisee and the tax collector, are not ideals drawn from an alternate reality. The example of Zacchaeus shows that they are accurate portraits of the real world. We fail to see their truth only when we ourselves become mesmerized by wealth, power and other worldly allurements. Instead, Christ’s disciples must continue to seek out the company of sinners, even great sinners, for many of these are on the threshold of conversion, awaiting only a sign of God’s love—perhaps from us—to become great saints.

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

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The Ones Who Will Rise

Readings: 2 Mc 7:1-14, Ps 17, 2 Thes 2:16-3:5, Lk 20:27-38

Jesus' journey to Jerusalem has come to an end. After leaving Zacchaeus behind in Jericho, Jesus went up from the Jordan Valley to the heights of Bethany, which rise over Jerusalem toward the east (Lk 19:11-34). Jesus then entered Jerusalem in triumph, an event we commemorate on Palm Sunday (28-44). Immediately after, he entered and cleansed the Temple (45-48).

Luke then recounts something extraordinary. Jesus returns to the Temple daily, where he teaches and interprets the Scriptures. He draws on passages from the Prophets (Lk 20:1-8, probably a reference to Dn 7:14, and Lk 20:9-19), the Psalms (Lk 20:41-44) and, in this Sunday's Gospel passage, the Torah.

Throughout these interactions Jesus encounters hostile opponents. His presence in the Temple is provocative, especially after he drove out the money changers and vendors on his earlier visit. Several people try to trick him into saying something that will get him arrested. Readers of Luke's Gospel realize something that these opponents do not: Jesus is secure in his Father's house.

In fact, the Temple is a framing device for Luke's en-

'They are the children of God because they are the ones who will rise.' (Lk 20:36)

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

How has Christ taught you the resurrection?

Do you live as if your life has eternal consequence?

With whom can you share Christ's promise of eternal life?

tire Gospel. Luke's account begins when Gabriel appears to Zechariah in the Temple, promising the birth of a son. Luke's Gospel ends with the apostles spending their days in the Temple praising God as they await the descent of the Spirit. This Sunday's Gospel passage, too, closes a narrative opened in the early chapters of Luke's Gospel. When Jesus was left behind in the Temple as a boy, he spent his time with the teachers of Torah, "listening to them and asking them questions; all who heard him were astounded at his understanding and his answers" (Lk 2:46-47). This time, however, his interlocutors are hostile, and the stakes are his very life.

In this Sunday's passage, the topic is the resurrection. Although the topic is well developed in later Jewish writings, like the prophecy of Daniel, the most important texts of the Hebrew Scriptures (from Genesis through Deuteronomy) do not overtly mention it. For some of the characters in today's reading, this omission renders the teaching suspect. They pose a question to Jesus that they believe will make the whole idea of resurrection unravel. Jesus subverts their question and reduces his questioners to silence by pointing out an implicit mention of the resurrection in Ex 3:2-16. He counters with his own question, to which they give no answer. Luke makes sure to show his readers that Jesus has nothing to fear in his Father's house; he is the master of every argument and the authentic teacher of Israel's religious tradition.


This is important to remember today. Evidence all around us can call into question any belief in eternal life. Under this questioning, Christianity can devolve into a purely moral venture—just one of many ethical systems that produce good behavior. But if we trust, as Luke did, that Jesus had deeper insights into God's action, then new realities suggest themselves. Jesus teaches in this Sunday's Gospel that every one of us lives a life of eternal consequence. Like him, we must live each day secure in the knowledge that, someday, we will rise again.

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

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There Will Be Fireworks for Her

A reflection on Cokie Roberts

By Tania Tetlow



Kyle Encarr/Loyola University New Orleans

In June, Cokie Roberts was kind enough to write in the pages of **America** about how her mother helped mentor me to become the president of a Jesuit university. I am heartbroken to write now about Cokie, whom we lost on Sept. 17, 2019. That morning you might have heard a collective howl of grief centered around Washington, D.C., and New Orleans.

What has comforted me is remembering the throaty laugh that Cokie and her mother shared—looking up and throwing their heads back with infectious joy. I know that heaven is full of their laughter now.

You probably knew her as a world-class reporter. You may not have realized that her reporting was rooted in a profound understanding of U.S. history because she grew up at the center of it.

Her parents, between them, represented New Orleans in Congress for 50 years and were a vital hub of Washington life. She bounced on Sam Rayburn's knee as a child and debated with dinner guests like Jack Kennedy. Cokie knew the workings of the U.S. government by heart because she was schooled in congressional procedure alongside her multiplication tables.

As a result, she held public servants to a high standard but also understood their fundamental humanity. As a journalist, she refused to score cheap points by demonizing others. Cokie also understood that no side

had a monopoly on truth. She never discounted ideas merely because of their source. In an era when we seem to be drowning in polemic, she reminded us of a better way.

She rose to the pinnacle of her profession at a time when women in her field were discounted and disrespected. Cokie's belief that the talents of women should not be squandered was rooted in her Catholic upbringing. She learned from the example of the Sacred Heart nuns, who taught her that women are supposed to run schools and hospitals.

Cokie reveled in her faith, and she had the great pleasure of covering her mother's appointment as the U.S. ambassador to the Holy See. She had the greater pleasure of watching Lindy, in her late 70s, flirt charmingly with the cardinals.

Cokie's interfaith marriage to Steven Roberts, the Jewish love of her life, made her ever more purposeful about faith. She hosted a perfect Seder and sang in the choir at Mass.

There is a Passover prayer of gratitude that keeps flooding into my mind. It is a recitation of the gifts God gives us, each one followed by the refrain "Dayenu," which means "it would have been enough." It would have been enough to have Cokie as a truth-teller. It would have been enough that she could bend language to her will and write so beautifully.

It would have been enough that she fought for justice. How could we be so lucky for God to give us someone who did so much more?

Her books and reporting mattered to millions, but Cokie also personally made a difference to more people than she could ever know. The intense love and devotion she gave her family multiplied for the rest of us, like loaves and fishes.

When her mother, Lindy, died six years ago at 97, Cokie took over the role as my mentor and friend without obligation. She gave me advice on leadership, marriage and parenting in equal measure because they matter equally. She reminded me frequently that my 7-year-old daughter's fierce independence is a blessing (and also karma).

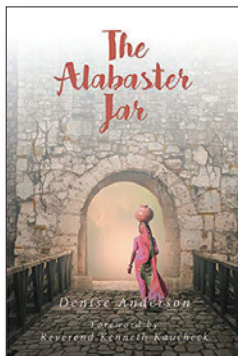
Whenever my daughter heard "Miss Cokie's" voice on the radio, Lucy would demand my phone to send her emoticon hearts, which were always promptly returned in kind. When I explained to Lucy that Miss Cokie had died, she went quiet for a long time and then announced, "On Thursday, there will be fireworks for her." That has proved so true.

Tania Tetlow is the president of Loyola University New Orleans.

Denise Anderson's newly released *The Alabaster Jar* is a sterling poetic meditation on pouring out one's soul to Jesus.

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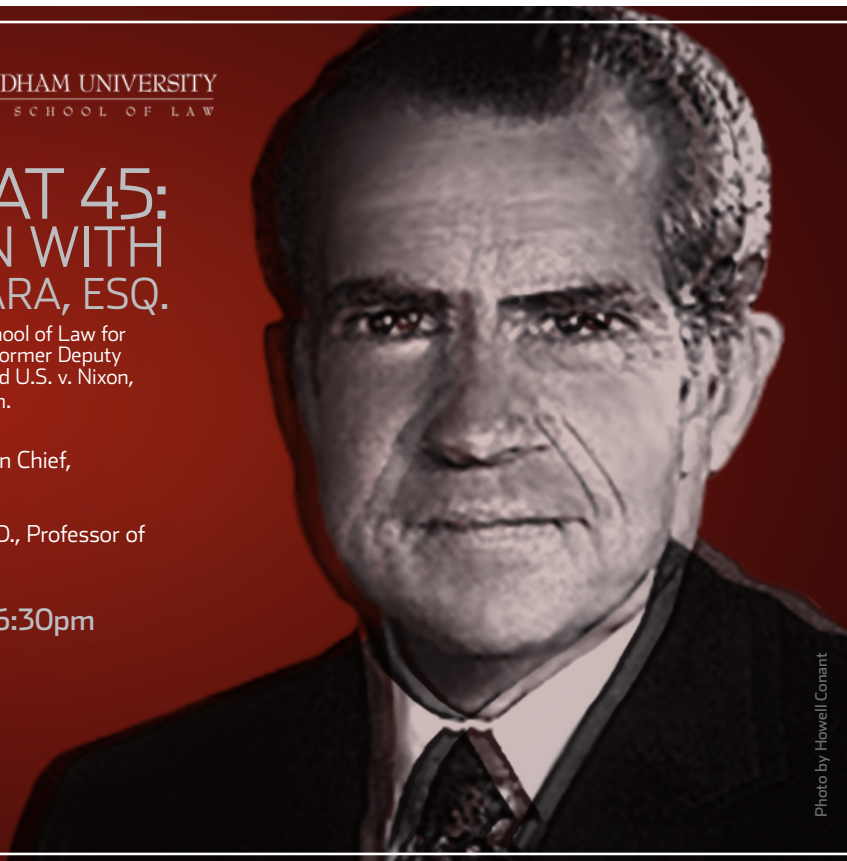


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