

America

THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC REVIEW

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Focusing on Faith

A REPORTER'S STORY

ELIZABETH DIAS

Sean Salai and
Edward J. Weisenburger
on the true cost of debt

Matt Malone, S.J., is traveling.

I do not remember when I first learned what an abortion is. I do remember when I first got into a fight over it. In seventh grade, a friend of mine announced she was pro-choice, so my other friend called her a baby-killer. I had not given much thought to the issue, but I must have heard something about it in C.C.D., and I knew my parents were Republicans, so I decided to stick with my tribe and join in the name-calling.

One might think the adults in the room would have found a more productive way to talk about abortion than middle school mean-girls. Anyone tuned in to the recent debates knows otherwise—that people on both sides are all too ready to assume the worst about the other's motivations. Pro-life advocates accuse Planned Parenthood of seeking to profit from baby parts. Pro-choice advocates frame the slightest restriction on abortion by pro-life advocates as an all-out war on women. That both Democrats and Republicans have made abortion a litmus test of party purity has not exactly elevated the tone of the discussion.

But if you listen to the people behind the positions, you quickly realize how unhelpful and obsolete such partisan framing is. Can you be pro-life and a feminist? What about a pro-life socialist? Can a small-l libertarian support restrictions on abortion? No question, say the millennials featured in a new video from **America**. For the film, I had the chance to speak with young, pro-life women from across the political spectrum who have encountered in their respective corners much that is dispiriting and dysfunctional about abortion politics in this country.

There is the Republican Christina Bennett, an African-American woman who has been called a racist for her pro-life advocacy. Elizabeth Bruenig, a Democratic Socialist, says that being

pro-life and involved in left politics can be “a bit of an island.” Almost all the women express frustration over a political landscape that does not accommodate a consistently pro-life, pro-woman ethic. “Agitated is a very good word,” says Addie Mena, “that there doesn't seem to be a place for pro-life feminists in modern society.”

While learning that Ms. Bennett was minutes away from being terminated in the womb may not convince staunch defenders of reproductive rights to support a 20-week abortion ban, it may help someone understand why she, as a black woman, sees the right to life as fundamental to the civil rights her heroes—Harriet Tubman, Martin Luther King Jr.—risked their own lives for. And I do not doubt that there are Americans who likewise have felt stigmatized or shamed for being pro-choice or having an abortion. Sharing the stories of women on both sides of the debate has value beyond political point-scoring; it can change if not minds, then hearts.

“At its best, reporting is an effort to bear witness to the heartbeat of the world and to name it, describe it and give it back to the world in a way that opens new conversations to understand truth.” So writes Elizabeth Dias, the recipient of the 2016 George W. Hunt, S.J., Prize, in this week's issue. As a journalist for *Time*, she does not tell stories with an agenda. But every act of storytelling can be an exercise in empathy. “Once you know the heart's beat, its aches and loves can take deeper shape,” she writes. “And in all of this messiness, the very human approaches the very sacred.”

This is a beautiful way to understand the vocation of a journalist. And it might just be the best way forward for the country to begin to close the deep divisions laid bare by this dispiriting and dysfunctional election year.

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ON THE WEB

James Martin, S.J., begins a weekly series of short video reflections on his **favorite saints**. Plus, Los Angeles correspondent Jim McDermott, S.J., talks **religion and television** on "America This Week." Full digital highlights on page 19 and at americamagazine.org.



A Spiteful Marriage Law

"We don't want terrorists obtaining green cards and citizenship through marriage." That was the rationale behind Louisiana's ban on issuing marriage licenses to foreign-born applicants who cannot produce birth certificates, according to the state legislator who sponsored the law. In reality, the ban, which took effect this year, does nothing to combat terrorism. Its effect has been to deny licenses to dozens of refugees, primarily from Southeast Asia, who have no way of obtaining birth certificates.

The law is no more than an expression of hostility toward immigrants and refugees, similar to the poisonous rhetoric that has been directed toward refugees of the civil war in Syria. It is echoed in the unnecessary bans on Shariah law passed by at least nine states out of fear that it might somehow override the U.S. and state constitutions, and in the hostility toward providing basic health care for undocumented immigrants.

In the closing days of the presidential campaign, Bishop Eusebio Elizondo of Seattle, chairman of the Committee on Migration of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, wrote that Catholics "have a special responsibility to reject the hostility that dominates the public conversation about immigration today." The Louisiana marriage license law, which panders to xenophobic voters, is now being challenged in court by a man who was born to Vietnamese parents in an Indonesian refugee camp and became a U.S. citizen at the age of 8. The law should be overturned or repealed, and the waste of time and money in enacting and defending the law should stand as a deterrent to similarly pointless legislation.

Energy Optimism

In North Dakota, the construction of an oil pipeline under a river that supplies drinking water to the Standing Rock Sioux tribe has created a 19th-century-style showdown over territorial lands and treaty rights. Renewable energy optimists might argue that confrontations over efforts to tap and move fossil fuel represent misplaced energy at a time when the United States could be making deeper investments in alternative sources that would make such conflicts anachronistic.

That position received some support from the International Energy Agency, which reported on Oct. 25 that renewable energy surpassed coal in 2015 as the largest source of installed power capacity in the world. The agency also bumped up its five-year growth forecast for renewables by 13 percent because of stronger backing for renewables in the United States, China, India and Mexico and significant

decreases in the cost of renewable infrastructure. It expects renewable sources to produce nearly 30 percent of the global electricity supply by 2021. These developments suggest the practical timetable for a transition to renewable energy—which could significantly mitigate the effects of climate change—may be accelerating. The argument that renewable sources are unreliable or too costly seems increasingly thin in the face of such rapid real-world adjustments.

China, fighting a profound air pollution problem in its major cities, is increasing its renewable energy at twice the rate of the United States. It will have the edge in renewable technology and commercial production unless Washington wakes up to the challenge and the opportunities of this evolving energy landscape. Instead of becoming bogged down in fights about pipelines, state and national policymakers should focus on advancing the coming transition to renewable energy sources

Free Speech on Facebook

When Facebook employees noted that a number of Donald J. Trump's posts—for example, his call for a ban on Muslims entering the United States—violated the site's hate speech policy, Mark Zuckerberg stepped in to preserve them in the name of free speech. In a leaked internal message published by The Wall Street Journal, Mr. Zuckerberg explained: "I know there are strong views on the election this year both in the US and around the world. We see them play out on Facebook every day. Our community will be stronger for its differences—not only in areas like race and gender, but also in areas like political ideology and religion."

It is surprising to see Facebook's chief executive employ a moral defense of free speech. Mr. Zuckerberg has claimed on numerous occasions that Facebook is "a tech company, not a media company" and thus remains neutral toward content. His willingness to discuss competing values is far more persuasive than the company's typical insistence that it is not accountable for what appears in a user's news feed.

Implicit moral values baked into algorithms and filters should be made more explicit and discussed across the technology industry. Even as Facebook protects Mr. Trump's free speech in the name of allowing political debate, it has been accused of suppressing posts that expose police brutality. As more of our news is filtered through social media, we should demand honesty and transparency about how these information gatekeepers shape public discourse. Claiming, "We are a technology company" does not exempt Facebook from criticism for the impact it has on important moral and civic discussions.

What to Do About Dictators?

What can a nation or church do when its leaders mislead? Some political leaders take the “strong man” approach, using violence to win popular support and to distract from domestic problems. Can their strategy be morally justified if they bring about peace, or at least the semblance of peace? Not if they defy civil, international or the moral law. Not if they sacrifice innocent life.

President Vladimir Putin, to re-establish Russia as a global superpower and solidify his own presidency, annexed Crimea and infiltrated eastern Ukraine with disguised military units with the possible intent of annexing it as well. He has entered the Syrian civil war on behalf of President Bashar al-Assad in order to retain a murderous dictator in power and, above all, to acquire a seaport and military presence for Russia. Although he presented his role as assisting the United States in its battle against the Islamic State, his bombs have fallen on Mr. Assad’s opponents, on hospitals, on schools and on an international convoy bringing food and medicine to embattled civilians. As a result of its conduct in Syria, Russia recently lost its seat on the United Nation’s Human Rights Council.

An equally distressing example of “strong man” government is in the Philippines. Thousands of alleged drug dealers have been killed since Rodrigo Duterte was elected president in May. As mayor of Davao City, Mr. Duterte ordered the killings of not just criminals but of his political opponents, and on one occasion, according to a self-confessed assassin, “finished off” a suspect with a machine gun. More than 3,600 persons have been killed without due process since Mr. Duterte’s inauguration. Death squads strike quickly at night, dragging individuals from their homes, killing them and dumping the bodies with cardboard signs on or near them that say “Drug Lord.” On Oct. 28 a mayor who was publicly accused by Mr. Duterte of having links to the drug trade was killed by police.

Both strongmen—particularly Mr. Putin, who has neutralized the Russian media—have a grip on power so profound that they ward off any opposition. What can be done?

The United States and its allies cannot ignore this problem. Nor should they adopt a position of moral triumphalism, arguing that “the Cold War is over and we won.” That war ended because both sides saw the horror of nuclear warfare and Mikhail Gorbachev, in his call for dialogue and cooperation, had set the stage for democracy. But power corrupted and society crumbled as the Russian economy sank

and profits from oil and gas evaporated. Meanwhile, money that should have gone to education, public health and infrastructure was spent on rebuilding armed forces and subsidizing the vodka industry. One of the tragic and underreported stories coming out of Russia is the ways in which the state has promoted excessive drinking to increase tax revenues and eliminate dissent by subduing its own populace. Meanwhile, Mr. Putin has polished his image as a world leader.



Possible responses to Mr. Putin include strengthening NATO’s European presence, increased economic sanctions and more creative diplomacy. Unfortunately the Russian Orthodox Church, under the leadership of Patriarch Kirill, enthusiastically supports Mr. Putin’s expansionism. Patriarch Kirill believes that church and state should work together since, with the fall of Communism, Russia has lacked “an ideological binding agent.” But by working with the state the church has sacrificed its prophetic voice.

In the Philippines, Mr. Duterte has insulted Pope Francis and ridiculed the Catholic Church for its stands on birth control and the death penalty, its reliance on ancient Scriptures and its “hypocrisy” on sexual abuse. Meanwhile the bishops’ conference has denounced vigilantism and the bounties paid to police who kill drug suspects. In a statement on Oct. 2 titled “Confused and Sad Yet Hopeful,” Archbishop Socrates Villegas, the president of the bishops’ conference, lamented “the slow erosion of Filipino values” as the country and its new president carry out a violent war on drugs.

The United States and other nations and international bodies can deplore these developments from afar, but stronger interventions offer multiple hazards of their own. Ultimately, change must come from within and below. The regimes of leaders like Mr. Putin and Mr. Duterte offer the church, as well as every citizen, an opportunity to present themselves as the presence of Christ in today’s world, where the value at stake is that of human life.

When political leaders take or endanger lives to shore up their own positions, inflate their international standing or advance dubious social agendas, they need to be resisted. The church has an important role to play in that resistance, especially when other civic forces have failed. Religious leaders must work with each other and with other leaders in their societies to find the resolve and courage to speak out against strength built on immoral foundations.

REPLY ALL

Disillusionment

Re “In Praise of Politics,” (Editorial 10/24): It seems to me that disillusionment extends far beyond politics. We look to our church and its leaders for unity and to speak out against those who treat the gift of life so poorly. We, the congregation, need our priests, church leaders and organizations to be on the same page with us in denouncing the reality of evil that clearly divides us regarding social issues and injustice. Hopefully, this election is an eye-opener for all about just how far the sheep have strayed, inside and outside the church.

MARTHA MURRAY
Online Comment

Justice Flounders

I much enjoyed the piece by Raymond A. Schroth, S.J., “Rethinking Russia” (10/24) and wonder if transition is on the cards. As in the United States,

in Russia the rich play while justice flounders, but Russia’s clean streets and fewer homeless show a less cruel civic culture than ours. Russians see us much less wholesome than we do ourselves.

I also see Dostoyevsky as Father Schroth does, as a supreme artist; but I am curious about whom Father Schroth sees as the second greatest Russian writer. I have never wished to visit Russia, but now the embers burn, as does my curiosity about the author’s literary favorites.

MICHAEL BURKE
Brookline, Mass.

A Little Farther

Re “Not Yet a Saint” (10/24): This is one of your best, Father Martin! This line really leapt out at me: “Come on, just a little farther.” It reminded me of the example of Peter walking on water toward Jesus. Peter walked a few steps with his eyes on Jesus and then looked around, realizing what he was

doing and where he was, before starting to sink in his panic. I think that in a World Youth Day sermon, St. John Paul II invited our youngsters to come farther, wade deeper. I’ll remember that line, Father Martin.

FRANK LAUCHER
Online Comment

Let’s Participate More

Re “Third Party,” by Ross McCullough (10/24): I think we should participate more after the election is over. Write, call, collectively assemble to demonstrate our concern, visit our legislators in person and make good arguments on issues on which we want to see positive action. Is this participation in helping our legislators know what policies people want enacted part of what Mr. McCullough calls sausage-making? I don’t think so; this term denigrates the process of making good policy. Special interests often have more influence than we ordinary citizens, but we could have a positive impact if we are persistent. All of this helps to educate our legislators about real people with real issues.

CATHERINE STANFORD
Online Comment

Judicial Appointments

Re “Docket Review,” by Ellen K. Boegel (10/24): I think it’s reasonable to avoid holding hearings on a nominee by a president who is soon leaving office and wait for a new president chosen by the people. What “soon” means can be debated. But it makes no difference—any party in power in Congress under circumstances like the present would insist on waiting and, regardless, this one has. So the conclusion may seem to be: Get out and vote. But you can’t really vote for a president on the basis of this issue alone, important as it may be. For me, as for many people, there is no way I could vote for anyone who would make the kind of judicial appointments I believe are important.

BILL McGEVERAN SR.
Online Comment

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Too Much To Ask

In “Stand-Down for U.S. Police?” (Current Comment, 10/17), the point is well made that increased training and re-evaluation of training for police departments are necessary. A key issue is whether local governments are willing or able to fund such efforts. Even if such training were accomplished, it would not resolve the overall mission of police departments. Earlier this year, David Brown, the African-American police chief in Dallas, said that we are asking our police force to do too much. He further said that in every societal failure, we put it on the cops to solve. Not enough mental health funding? Let the cops handle it. That is too much to ask. Policing was never meant to solve all problems. So, if we are going to ask U.S. police to stand down, let’s also ask the same of our elected officials who are simply not doing their job.

KEN BALASKOVITS
Park Ridge, Ill.

Positive Resistance

As Patrick Gilger, S.J., says in his article “Re-enchanting the World” (10/10), it is hard to find belonging in an age where we lack a sense of common meaning. As a result, Father Gilger explains, protest movements can become a major source of commonality. But, he argues, bonds based on resistance and refusal are fragile if they lack a positive orientation.

Yet, while belonging is tenuous in some ways, being a part of certain systems is the nearly unavoidable default. Simply being a U.S. citizen, for example, makes me complicit in anything the government does in my name or with my tax dollars—from deporting undocumented immigrants and bombing foreign countries to funding schools, infrastructure projects and services to those in need. I, along with the vast majority of Americans, cannot meet my basic needs without using products produced by people I do not know. I am connected to public power grids, water-

lines and sewer systems, and I depend on fossil fuels for transportation.

Some aspects of this connectedness might be good. But the consequences of our interrelatedness make it more difficult to act as though we truly belong to each other. The systems we are a part of can hurt workers at home and abroad, innocent citizens of countries with which we are at war, migrants fleeing violence, people living in poverty or future generations who need the earth to remain a livable environment. Sometimes, it is precisely for the sake of recognizing our connection to—and responsibility for—our fellow humans that we build movements that include a strong element of protest and refusal. And when we begin from the premise that we belong to each other, we do not just resist the “reigning social system” for the sake of resistance; we also have a constructive vision to work toward.

I first realized how difficult—and beautiful—this kind of resistance can be when I visited White Rose Catholic Worker Farm in La Plata, Mo. If you ask members of White Rose what they are against, they might have a long list, including militarism, global warming, consumerism, torture and exploitation of workers. It is their opposition to these forms of violence and oppression that led them to refuse things many Americans consider necessities—paid employment, cars, pre-packaged food, indoor plumbing and electricity—in order to avoid paying taxes that fund unjust wars, polluting the environment and supporting unethical businesses. Yet they might also tell you that distancing themselves from many mainstream institutions and practices has made them closer to God, nature and their fellow humans. As they see it, disconnecting as much as they can from the U.S. government, the global economy and modern technology has not isolated them; it is this very detachment that frees them to live lives of sacrifice, community and joy.

While more extreme than many

Catholic Workers, White Rose is part of a long tradition of resistance and community building started by Peter Maurin and Dorothy Day in the 1930s. Models of “refusal” in many ways, Day, Maurin and many Catholic Workers since have resisted the government by committing acts of nonviolent civil disobedience: refusing to pay taxes, to be drafted or to register as nonprofits, and criticizing state-sponsored welfare programs.

Yet Maurin and Day stood for much more than refusal. Their whole manner of thinking was based around a positive message rooted in the Gospel: the recognition of the value of each human, and the premise that we must take responsibility for recognizing that value through direct acts of service, voluntary poverty, pacifism and communal living. The movement they started is responsible for hundreds of houses of hospitality (including the Oakland Catholic Worker, where I live and work), which focus on meeting the needs of their local communities.

Whether we choose belonging or refusal, we are at our best when all of our decisions are centered around the people we try to serve—particularly Latin American immigrants living in our area but also other neighbors in East Oakland, our nation and people around the world. What impresses me most about the Oakland Catholic Worker is the community of hundreds of donors and volunteers who contribute to our work each year: the staff, volunteers and board members who came to receive help and returned to serve others; the guests who braved the border to make a better life for their children; and the kids who steal our office supplies, care for their younger siblings and brighten our lives with their artwork. We may not have put the world back together but, while we work on that, we try to exemplify the positive goal of resistance by bringing our community together.

MARIA BENEVENTO
Oakland, Calif.

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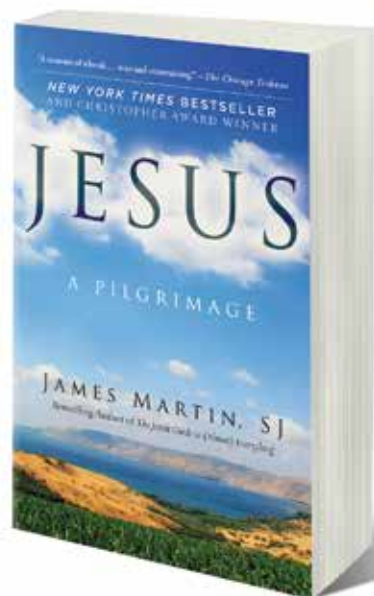
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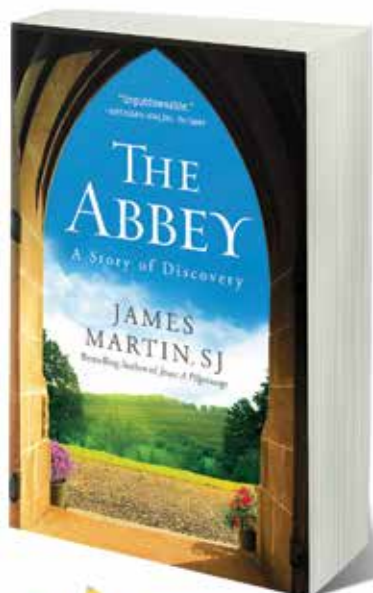
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CARE OF CREATION

As Mass Extinction Threatens, Are Catholics Listening to ‘Laudato Si’?



CRITICAL CONDITION. Scientists say the Puget Sound Orca population near Seattle, Wash., is seriously threatened because of the decline of a major food source, chinook salmon, caused by dams on the Lower Snake River.

The global wildlife population has fallen 58 percent from 1970, according to “The Living Planet” report by the World Wildlife Fund and the Zoological Society of London. Researchers say deforestation, pollution, overfishing and the illegal wildlife trade, together with climate change, “are pushing species populations to the edge.”

“For the first time since the demise of the dinosaurs 65 million years ago, we face a global mass extinction of wildlife,” said Mike Barrett, director of science and policy at W.W.F.-U.K., in a written statement. “We ignore the decline of other species at our peril—for they are the barometer that reveals our impact on the world that sustains us.”

The report, released on Oct. 27, predicts that by 2020, populations of vertebrate species could fall by 67 percent from 1970 levels unless action is taken to reverse the damaging impacts of human activity.

In his encyclical “Laudato Si,” Pope Francis issued some stern warnings on the care of creation. Did the encyclical have an effect by encouraging lifestyle changes that may help diminish or even reverse the trends depicted in the “Living Planet” report?

Researchers at the Annenberg Public Policy Center reported in a study released on Oct. 24 that a Francis effect through “Laudato Si” so far remains hard to discern.

“While Pope Francis’ environmental call may have increased some individuals’ concerns about climate change, it backfired with conservative Catholics and

non-Catholics, who not only resisted the message but defended their pre-existing beliefs by devaluing the pope’s credibility on climate change,” wrote Nan Li, the lead author of the report.

But Dan Misleh, the executive director of Catholic Climate Covenant, found the report itself and the timing of its release a bit of a head-scratcher. According to Annenberg, the data used in its study was obtained from almost 1,400 20-minute phone interviews conducted one week before the release of “Laudato Si” on June 18, 2015, and another 1,400 or so interviews two weeks later. Why release that study now when the data is more than a year old, he asks, and why not look at a longer timeframe to determine an impact? Mr. Misleh noted that a Yale study released in November 2015 in fact tracked

a significant impact on public attitudes that it attributed to “Laudato Si.”

He suggested that at the time of Annenberg researchers were making their calls, probably few lay Catholics, much less people from other denominations, had yet found the time to read through the nearly 200-page encyclical. Worse, he adds, the attention of the nation was properly distracted in the timeframe of the phone survey by the horror of the Charleston, S.C., church massacre.

The Annenberg study may have measured personal views and found the pope’s impact wanting, but it is hard to argue that the pope’s encyclical did not have a political impact on the problem. His message on climate change and care of creation was at the forefront of international policy discussions, being included within months at his-

toric speeches before Congress and the United Nations; by December it brought a spiritual ethic on climate change into the Paris climate change negotiations that eventually led to a historic compact to confront the problem.

Mr. Misleh was aware anecdotally of many parish- and community-based

initiatives that emerged, and continue to appear, in reaction to “Laudato Si.”

“There were like 110 statements or press release or articles written by bishops within two weeks after it was released,” Mr. Misleh said. “I don’t think the bishops have ever responded that way to an encyclical letter.”

KEVIN CLARKE

WOMEN IN THE CHURCH

Unprecedented Preaching

One of the more intriguing questions Pope Francis prompted earlier this year when he announced that a Vatican commission would study whether the early church had women deacons was: How would Catholics react to women preaching?

Some Catholic women hope to find out.

A new website called Catholic Women Preach will publish videos showing just that, Catholic women preaching. The women’s reflections will draw from the church’s weekly readings. The women backing the project say they hope the videos will help Catholics deepen their faith and become more comfortable with the idea of women preaching.

“The kinds of things that women preach about are qualitatively different and touch us in ways that other topics don’t touch us,” Deborah Rose-Milavec, executive director of Future Church and a founder of Catholic Women Preach, told *America*.

“Even if it’s a bit of a foreign experience to them,” she continued, “once people begin to listen deeply to the wisdom and the words of these Catholic women preaching, it also will touch them in brand new ways.”

Church law allows laypeople, including women, to preach only in extraordinary circumstances, when an ordained minister is not available. Though it is rare, women have



preached in some U.S. churches. In the Diocese of Rochester, for example, laypeople were permitted to preach by the local bishop beginning in 1979, but the practice was ended in 2014.

And even if women are ordained deacons someday, there is no guarantee that they will be allowed to preach—at least not in the way Catholics are accustomed to today. In comments earlier this year, the pope suggested that priests, acting *in persona Christi* during the Mass, should give the homily. But there would be “no problem,” he said, with women offering scriptural reflections in other settings, like prayer services. One of the founders of the proj-

ect said women of various perspectives are being sought to preach.

“We’ll have the most fabulous, theologically educated and faith-filled Catholic women from around the world offering five- to seven-minute reflections on the Catholic lectionary,” said Elizabeth Donnelly, another founder of the project and part of a team that meets annually with church officials in Rome to talk about women in the church.

The project is scheduled to launch on Nov. 1, in time for Advent, and the first half-dozen videos include reflections from a mix of Catholic women religious and laywomen.

Kicking off the series is Jamie Phelps, O.P., a retired Catholic theologian who lives in Chicago. She said she accepted an invitation to be part of the series because she thinks the videos will “make plain the fact that some women are called and gifted as preachers.”

“Since there’s a diversity of perspectives and experiences out there,” she said, “the more diversity of preachers we have who can tune into the felt needs of the community and of the people, the further along the mission of Jesus Christ is carried.”

Organizers said that women from all over the world will take part.

Sister Phelps, who is African-American and who will preach about overcoming class, race and ethnic divisions, said that in an increasingly secular society, the church would benefit from expanding opportunities for women to preach.

“I’m not saying that everybody needs to preach,” she said. “But there are gifts out there that are not being recognized, not being nurtured, not being used to continue the mission of Jesus Christ.”

MICHAEL O’LOUGHLIN

Catholic Caring

Three Catholic charitable organizations that support programs in the United States and around the world rank among the top 100 groups in terms of fundraising on “Philanthropy 400,” a list maintained by The Chronicle of Philanthropy. Catholic Charities USA fell one spot on the list from last year to number five, raising about \$2 billion in 2015. That is down about 4 percent compared with the year before. The U.S. Catholic Church’s main international charity, Catholic Relief Services, came in at number 61. It raised almost \$391 million, a jump of 8 percent compared with the year before. New York-based Catholic Medical Mission Board, which works to improve health care in developing nations, was ranked 93. It raised about \$276 million in 2015. The University of Notre Dame came in at number 63, raising close to \$380 million last year, up nearly 19 percent from the previous year.

Cardinal Pell Answers Aussie Police Inquiry

Australian police questioned Cardinal George Pell, prefect of the Secretariat for the Economy, in Rome regarding accusations of sexual abuse. Cardinal Pell was “voluntarily interviewed” by Victoria police in late October, said a statement on Oct. 26 from the cardinal’s office. “The cardinal repeats his previous rejection of all and every allegation of sexual abuse and will continue to cooperate with Victoria police until the investigation is finalized,” the statement said. Allegations surfaced in July in a report by Australia’s ABC News featuring several people who accused Cardinal Pell of sexual assault; at least one of the accusations had been found to be unsubstantiated by an Australian court in 2002. Cardinal Pell dismissed

NEWS BRIEFS

Iraqi Christians gathered on Oct. 25 at the Church of our Lady of Perpetual Help in Ainkawa, Turkey, to offer prayers of support for Iraqi forces pressing an offensive against the Islamic State around Mosul. + President Nicolas Maduro of Venezuela **met privately with Pope Francis** an Oct. 24 as the Vatican began a mediation effort to end the political and economic crisis in Venezuela. + Rapid growth in the number of men **entering St. John’s Seminary** prompted the Archdiocese of Boston to buy back space from Boston College on Oct. 20. + Italy’s Interior Ministry released figures on Oct. 28 documenting a record monthly landing of **26,161 migrants**—almost all from West Africa and the Horn of Africa—while another 1,000 were pulled from dinghies on the Mediterranean later that day. + The South African government announced on Oct. 20 that it plans to withdraw from the **International Criminal Court**, provoking fears of widespread abandonment of the court throughout the continent. + The camp for **undocumented migrants in Calais, France**, known as “the jungle,” was cleared out by French security forces on Oct. 26 as some frustrated, departing migrants set fire to parts of the slum.



A prayer for Mosul

the accusations as “nothing more than a scandalous smear campaign,” and a statement issued by his office said that “claims that he has sexually abused anyone, in any place, at any time in his life are totally untrue and completely wrong.”

After-Brexit Worries

The U.K.’s Catholic Association for Racial Justice plans to identify and support specific groups who have become newly vulnerable since Brexit. Long involved in supporting Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, the association welcomed a report, “Roma Communities and Brexit,” from the Institute of Public Policy. The study traces the migration of Roma communities from Central and Eastern Europe to the United Kingdom and

warns that once European Union funding for the integration of this group is withdrawn post-Brexit, the U.K. government may not make up the shortfall. “These communities, already among the most disadvantaged in our society, now find themselves newly vulnerable in a number of ways. There is uncertainty over their future right of residency; they will feel insecure given the recent rise in hate crime; and E.U. funding to support Roma integration may cease.” The association has joined the Caritas Social Action Network in encouraging members of the U.K. Catholic community to make themselves aware of the issues raised in the report and to become actively involved in public discussion about how Brexit will affect Roma communities.

From America Media, CNS, RNS, AP and other sources.

DISPATCH | JOHANNESBURG

A Bananas Republic?

This may not be a very politically correct statement, but there are days in South Africa now when one feels one is living in an asylum run by the patients. Chaos and intransigence in the universities is matched by absurd criminal charges against a minister of finance who may only be doing his job too well. In the latter case, President Jacob Zuma brushes off the crisis by asserting that he cannot do anything about the charges against Minister Pravin Gordhan because the law must take its course, lest South Africa become a “banana republic.” This is said as his government starts the process of withdrawing from the International Criminal Court.

South Africa’s National Prosecuting Authority have made various attempts to indict Mr. Gordhan, a stubborn critic of the Zuma government. The charges change, but in every instance they range from the trivial to the absurd. The whole process seems a desperate attempt to remove the diligent minister from office so that he may be replaced by a Zuma-compliant figure who will sign checks to bail out South African Airways—run into the ground by a Zuma appointee—and seal the deal with the Russian atomic energy developer Rosatom for the construction of power stations that will effectively bankrupt the country.

Meanwhile, the national university system is paralyzed by violent strikes. A protest movement called “Fees

Must Fall” has since 2015 been calling for free tertiary state education (Most universities in South Africa are state-owned and state-subsidized, a legacy of our British past.) Classes have been disrupted, and violence and vandalism have occurred on most campuses. The movement, modeling itself on the Arab Spring, has taken a legitimate concern—the inability of talented poor students to afford an education, cuts in education subsidies and mis-

A conspiracy theorist might speculate that the street movement exists to distract the public from bigger issues.

management of the student grants system—and turned it into what is becoming a rebellion against the state.

It has also become a convenient sideshow that offers a range of interpretations. Given that most university administrations and most South Africans sympathize with the idea of affordable tertiary education, the intransigence of the movement’s leaders invites the speculation that their true goal may be to render the state ungovernable. At the very least, the student unrest highlights the thousands of protests every year that reflect the failure of government and the ruling African National Congress party to deliver on its election promises. The A.N.C. had promised free tertiary education in its election campaign in 2013.

A real conspiracy theorist might speculate that the street movement exists to distract the public from big-

ger issues—the decision to withdraw South Africa from the jurisdictional requirements of the I.C.C., for example, or the attempts to undermine Mr. Gordhan and the recently retired public protector, Thuli Madonsela. Ms. Madonsela had led a campaign to clean up a government marked by corruption at the highest level, gross mismanagement and “state capture” of key national resources by business allies of the president himself, the India-based Gupta family.

While the media focused on the universities, Mr. Zuma and his cronies used their political influence to indict Mr. Gordhan. While police fire rubber bullets and stun grenades at students, Mr. Zuma prevents his former public protector’s report on state capture to be released while her newly appointed successor, Busisiwe Mkhwebane, goes on holiday in Venice.

In short, this is the season of lies, damn lies and bananas.

In *Make or Break: How the Next Three Years Will Shape South Africa’s Next Three Decades* (Cape Town: Zebra Press), published a few weeks ago, the lawyer and political analyst Richard Calland warns that the outcome of the Gordhan crisis may have a lasting impact on the country. If Mr. Gordhan and his growing number of allies both within the center and “sensible left” faction of the A.N.C. and within wider civil society succeed, South Africa has a chance of recovery. If Mr. Gordhan fails, the nation will be on the path to the banana republic status Mr. Zuma so cynically alluded to.

My sense is that when Mr. Zuma warns of a banana republic, he is being disingenuous. He and his associates too often appear to be seeking to turn this into a self-fulfilling prophecy.

ANTHONY EGAN

ANTHONY EGAN, S.J., a member of the Jesuit Institute South Africa, is one of America’s Johannesburg correspondents.

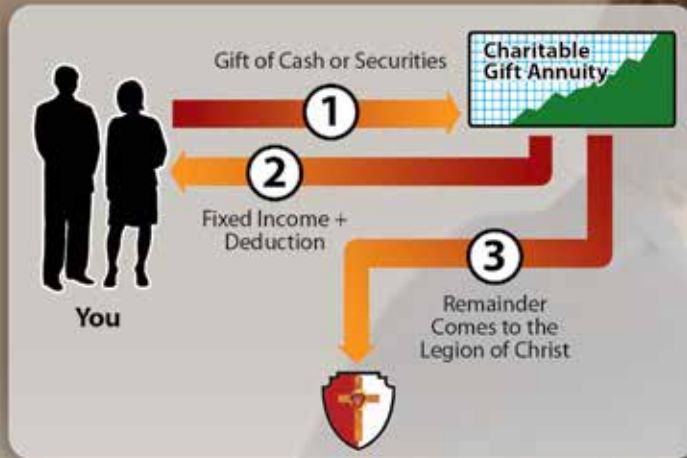
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Answering Our Daughters

I was addressing a diocesan women's conference when the mother of a teenage girl asked me a difficult question. If I do not have a better answer next time—and if the church universal does not have more answers to offer soon—I wonder how we will engage girls of the 21st century.

Her daughter wanted to know how to relate to a church where a father God sends a son whose good news is proclaimed most visibly by a male hierarchy.

I am not a theologian. Bummer. But I did the best I could with the classic responses. I spoke of taking Jesus' incarnation seriously while remembering the Marian face of the church. I referred to the problem of mistaking ordination for a power trip. I affirmed equality alongside a diversity of sexes and roles. I argued for God's image as two-sexed and Jesus' good news as transcending the listener's sex. I spoke of the many vowed and laywomen who already lead Catholic efforts, and of the near invisibility of women's heroic family and service work.

But I still felt inadequate.

A male clergy running the most important institutions in Catholic lives, dispensing moral guidance and weekly interpreting revelation, would seem powerful in anybody's book. Even as we know their work to be service. Even as we know their sacrifices on our behalf.

We proclaim Christ as the model human, that Christology is anthropology. Of course, women and men look

to Mary as the human who conformed herself most closely to Christ. She was as brave and strong as any person imaginable. Still, no one should be surprised that many 21st-century Catholic women do not clearly grasp her. There is no "vicar of Mary." Mary is known most as "mother," while contemporary women are single longer and more often single mothers. We are also employees and not infrequently breadwinners for our families.

Women are more used to operating independently in some spheres and to collaborating with men in others. We participate in the governance of institutions that affect us. At work, we find female role models of efficacy in formerly all-male environs. We struggle to put family first while also doing justice at work.

In the personal realm, most women desire both children and commitment from their father but have revealed a willingness to enjoy the former without the latter, if that is the best we can get. We are regularly told that sexual availability unlinked from children and marriage is the starting block of a relationship. Look "hot," and everything else will follow.

It can be argued for all the "classic" reasons listed above that young Catholic women can manage without more visible female role models within the church, more collaboration with clergy and more guidance pertinent to women. And it is true that the church should not operate like IBM. I am saying only that if the church wants

women to know real freedom—the freedom of the daughters of Christ—then it needs to make the case more visibly, and more intentionally directed to women's new historical situation.

This is hard, and I can offer only initial suggestions. Perhaps more female saints who have juggled the demands of the contemporary female life! Certainly also more insights from qualified women wherever doctrine and pastoral practices are deliberated: synods, bishops' conferences, diocesan and parish groups. If the church takes God's two-sexed image seriously—and it does—then it is clear that women's comparative advantages must be joined to men's in order to understand God and the Christian life.

Women's comparative advantages must be joined to men's.

This is not to fall into the clericalism trap. Rather, substantial collaboration should help men to better experience their work as service and women to value their contributions precisely as women. Surely, too, this would better reveal the Marian church Pope Francis celebrates.

There are inevitable moral hazards when any one group leads an enterprise. There are inevitable lacunae when any affected group is excluded from significant collaboration. Women are living in a new historical era. If the church is to be for younger women what it is meant to be for all—the living Christ present at every point in history—I suggest we provide some new forms of witness, dialogue and representation for women.

HELEN ALVARÉ is a professor of law at George Mason University, where she teaches law and religion and family law.

REPORTING ON THE RHYTHMS OF FAITH



CNS PHOTO/PAUL HARING

The Heart Beat

BY ELIZABETH DIAS

A BIG STORY. Pope Francis greets journalists aboard his flight to Havana on Feb. 12.

The creator of the news magazine knew the power of religion. Henry Luce, the founder of *Time*, was born to Presbyterian missionary parents in China at the end of the 19th century. He grew up writing sermons for fun. And he made religion one of the five pillars of *Time's* coverage. Luce once said, "I became a journalist to come as close as possible to the heart of the world."

The heart loves; the heart aches. It can wound and it can break. And, through all that, the heart does something more: it beats. Most of the time we do not even notice it. But that pulse orders our lives and the lives of others. When it is working right, the heart pumps blood through the body, five or six quarts a minute, and gives us life. When it is not, the mere skip of a beat can feel like a heart attack.

Reporting is an exercise in monitoring that beat, noticing when and how it changes,

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sometimes sounding an alarm when it races or slows or falters. Most often, reporting is simply being there with the heart, hearing it pump, feeling it beat, in a moment, over weeks and even through the years.

Today the pulse of American spiritual life is shifting. There is not just one pulse. There are many, and they often conflict. There is the rise of the so-called spiritual nones, the “Godless generation”; the growing acceptance of lesbian, gay and transgender communities in churches, Protestant and Catholic; the global migration of people, unaccompanied children leaving Central America, Syrians fleeing terrorism, refugees seeking shelter and, in all, the interfaith shuffle that it brings; Americans’ continued fear of Muslims and misperception of Shariah law; the rise of women in religious leadership; violence against black and brown bodies; the list goes on.

I would like to discuss three of the stories that define the American spiritual and political landscape in this moment. Each is a heartbeat in the American spiritual life. Each reflects a pulse of this nation, and each has rooted my religion and politics coverage at Time.

I do not claim to be a theologian. I am a reporter. My job is to track the moves of the flocks. I write what I see, what I hear, what I learn. At its best, reporting is an effort to bear witness to the heartbeat of the world and to name it, describe it and give it back to the world in a way that opens new conversations to understand truth.

The Latino Reformation

One day four years ago, during another presidential election, I was driving in a Maryland suburb of Washington when I noticed a small sign shoved between the Romney/Ryan and Obama/Biden campaign signs that lined every inch of the street. Unlike the others, this sign was in Spanish: *Iglesia de Dios del Evangelio Completo*. Clearly not a candidate for president. Down the road, I spotted another: *Primera Iglesia Bautista Hispana de Maryland*. Not long after that, one Sunday afternoon I noticed a bus: *Iglesia Cuadrangular el Calvario*. I decided to follow it. Soon we arrived at a church. Some 500 Spanish-speaking worshipers were inside, singing *alabanzas*, or praise songs. Some held tambourines, some were dancing under a giant flag of a lion with a mane of orange sunbeams, others waving streamers and fans. A wom-

an had a prophecy, and the pastor rushed the microphone to her: “The Lord will heal people in this room today!” she cried in Spanish. “*Gloria a Dios!*”

The worshipers, as you might have guessed, were not Catholics. They were Protestants, born-again, Bible-believing, Spanish-speaking charismatics. They represent one of the fastest-growing segments of American churchgoers. More than two-thirds of the 52 million Latinos in the United States in 2010 were Catholic, according to the Pew Research Center. At the time, the best guess was that by 2030 that figure would be closer to half. But today that number is almost there. Nearly one in four Latinos in the United States is a former Catholic. And many are flocking to these evangelical Protestant churches. And many of these churches are doubling in size every few years. They are the *evangélicos*.

I spent eight months attending worship services at three different Latino evangelical churches. I was struck by how the *evangélico* boom is tied to the immigrant experience. Church means survival. Each community took “feed the hungry and clothe the naked” seriously. A single mother wept as she told me how she first met members of the church. The members of the church were cleaning her office late one night when they learned she did not have an apartment. They decided to move to a two-bedroom unit so she and her baby could live with them. Another woman shared that God stopped her 12 years of migraines after the church community fasted for three days. Yet another testified that her internal bleeding stopped when the pastor anointed her with oil. The pastor of one of the churches said to me, “I don’t want to say from the altar on Sunday, ‘If someone has a need, let me know,’ because I will have a line of people out the door Monday morning, needing money for rent, food.... But we never let people stay in need. We are not going to be able to sleep if we know a family needs food.”

It was a reminder of how tightly theology and experience are bound up together. Here, “*Gloria a Dios*” is no throw-away line. A woman prayed so hard once she vomited, or exorcised a demon. Others passed out. At these churches, “the Lord is near to the brokenhearted” takes on concrete hope and it is transformative. For many of these believers, to move to Protestantism is often a path to a more prosper-



Elizabeth Dias takes the podium to deliver the 2016 Hunt Prize lecture.

ous “American” life. And it was impossible to miss that these churches were so separated from their white counterparts. Sunday is still the most segregated day in America.

The church in the United States is not dying. It is changing. Now, three years later, *evangélico* churches are less hidden. As a reporter, when you are watching society move long enough in one direction, it is time to turn around. The force waiting to fill the pressure vacuum in your wake is revealing. At the time only 15 percent of new Catholic priests ordained in the United States were Latino, and the Catholic Church had 4,800 parishes with Latino programming. The Southern Baptist Convention, the largest evangelical denomination in the United States, saw opportunity—leaders have been working to start 7,000 Baptist Hispanic churches by 2020.

In hindsight, what came next was obvious. The bold counterstrike came in March 2013, when the College of Cardinals named Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio of Argentina as pope, the first Latin American pontiff, poised to renew not just the Americas but the Catholic Church worldwide. Would he be able to reverse an exodus?

Pope Francis

The moment he emerged on the papal balcony, Pope Francis became a defining story of this age: pope for the poor, for the developing world, a priest with an uncommon feel for the common man. Now, three years into a Francis papacy, we are used to his style—we expect him to surprise, to lead from the margins.

I remember arriving in Rome last year, the Sunday before the papal trip to Cuba and the United States, and pulling up to St. Peter’s Square and being so disoriented. It was the same as it always was: giant stone fortress, huge dome. St. Peter’s itself looked so distant, so out of reach, so out of place. How was this place home to the pope of the people? Pope Francis reigns here? In just two and half short years, he had made power and might and all the traditional associations of Rome seem so bizarre.

And yet, that view from below needed more examination. As I was trying to understand the giant stone fortress, I was also writing a feature about how Pope Francis had revitalized the Vatican’s role in global diplomacy. He has drawn attention to the Mediterranean migrant crisis from the very start of his papacy, and more recently called on Catholic dioceses to house refugee families. He speaks out about the persecution of Christians in Syria and Iraq. He praised the nuclear deal between the United States and Iran. His encyclical on the environment was timed perfectly to influence the Paris climate agreement. And of course there was Cuba. On the way back from an earlier trip to Paraguay, Pope Francis dismissed his role in the rapprochement, saying, “We did hardly anything, only small things.”

That is a bit of a stretch. What he did not say was that he

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had dispatched Cardinal Jaime Ortega y Alamino of Havana to secretly visit the White House and deliver a personal letter from him to President Obama, as he had done days earlier to the Cuban president, Raul Castro. President Obama listened as Cardinal Ortega read the letter aloud: Pope Francis was offering assistance to help the United States and Cuba overcome their distrust. The two countries took him up on it. And we know how that ended. Later the Vatican even offered to help relocate prisoners from the military prison at Guantánamo Bay so that it can be closed.

Francis' small things have already proven to be a big deal for the rest of the world. I have never seen the U.S. Congress so happy as when they, the powerful, listened to Francis. And at the same time, I never saw people happier to see Francis than those whose experience he was lifting up with his presence. In Philadelphia, one of the most joyful events occurred when Pope Francis met immigrant families in front of Independence Hall, where America's "Declaration of Independence" was forged. "Many of you have emigrated to this country at great personal cost, but in the hope of building a new life," he told them. "Do not be discouraged by whatever challenges and hardships you face. I ask you not to forget that like those who came here before you, you bring many gifts to your new nation. You should never be ashamed of your traditions." That is not a message many of them hear from the powerbrokers of this nation.

Pope Francis has used his power to call other powerbrokers to a new humility. That is a cost for politicians. At the end of his climate encyclical "Laudato Si,'" he offered this prayer:

Enlighten those who possess power and money
that they may avoid the sin of indifference,
that they may love the common good, advance the weak,
and care for this world in which we live.
The poor and the earth are crying out.

Together, this humility and this influence are a paradox, and they have defined Pope Francis' papacy so far. It is a reminder to hear heartbeats behind heartbeats and notice how they sound together.

Now the pendulum is swinging again. There is a different pressure vacuum. A year to the day after Pope Francis spoke to those immigrant families, Americans watched the first presidential debate of the 2016 election. It is difficult to imagine a more opposite leadership strategy, not to mention temperament, to Pope Francis than Donald J. Trump.

The Prosperity Preachers

Of all the surprising elements of Donald Trump's rise in American politics, the religious story has been one of the most baffling. Trump calls himself a Presbyterian, a "Sunday church person," and he has waved his childhood Bible at rallies. He has bragged that he does not ask for forgiveness, famously quoted "Two Corinthians" instead of "Second Corinthians," touted his wealth as a crowning achievement and admitted he is not sure he has deserved evangelicals' support.

The tight grip of evangelicals in Republican politics is not new, but during this cycle the pastors who rallied around the G.O.P. nominee have been different from the start. There is Paula White, a popular Pentecostal televangelist from Orlando, Fla., who has been Trump's longtime spiritual counselor. On the last day of the Republican National Convention, White prayed for Trump

for four hours, and then prayed privately with him, that he would share God's words when he accepted the Republican nomination. She attributes his speech that night to God. "I think there was a different tone that night, and I think that is because of his heart being open to God," she told me. Early on, White invited peers like Jan Crouch, the founder of Trinity Broadcasting Network, and Clarence McClendon, the reality star from the show "Preachers of LA," to pray with Trump at Trump Tower. Joel Osteen, the megachurch and self-help pastor, has called Trump "an incredible communicator and brander" and "a good man." Jerry Falwell Jr., son of the late, prominent televangelist and founder of Liberty University in Virginia, was the first big-name evangelical to endorse Trump in January.

The moment I realized just how different these pastors on the Trump trail were came during a rally in Illinois in March. A virtually unknown African-American pastor, Mark Burns, from the small town of Easley, S.C., pumped up the crowd with chants of Trump's name. He began to prophesy in prayer: "Lord, this will be the greatest Tuesday that ever existed, come Super Tuesday Three.... There is no black person, there is no white person, there is no yellow person, there is no red person, there's only green people!" he shouted. "Green is money! Green are jobs!!"

His was not a usual conversion narrative—it was economic. God, Burns says, has economically transformed his life. Once, before he found Jesus, he says he relied on food stamps, lived in Section 8 housing, went to jail and faced a charge of simple assault as part of his self-described "baby mama drama." Now he runs a for-profit television church ministry. He told me, "Jesus said, above all things, I pray that you prosper, I pray that you have life more abundantly," quoting not Jesus

**At its best,
reporting is an effort
to bear witness to
the heartbeat of the
world and to name it.**

but another New Testament passage. “It was never Jesus’ intention for us to be broke. I think that is what Donald Trump represents.”

Many of the pastors around Donald Trump preach a version of what theologians call “the prosperity gospel,” a controversial conviction that God wants his followers to be wealthy and healthy. Prosperity preachers do not just want Americans to be saved, they want them to be successful. Trump himself resembles a prosperity preacher—come, follow me, and you will find success. It makes sense—he is a longtime disciple of “the great Norman Vincent Peale,” as he calls him, the 20th-century evangelist who preached positive thinking and reached millions through television and radio programs. When Trump says he is winning states when he is not, or that black Americans love him when they overwhelmingly do not, he is enacting a theological principle of “name it and claim it” theology, envisioning future success in the present tense.

Until now, this strain of evangelicalism has had little power in American politics. It is much younger as a religious movement than evangelicalism in the United States—about 100 years old. But it is a strategic alliance for Trump—both are rejected by traditional power, and they have popular support. In the last year, this new set of believers has risen up, and now we are seeing it flex its national political muscles for the first time. It is making some evangelicals so frustrated that they want to reject the term “evangelical” and call themselves something new.

From Pope Francis to Donald Trump, in just one year. Would any of us have predicted this force during the papal visit? For me it was a lesson to listen harder, to learn what deeper pressures are building and shaping society. And now, as always, another turning point must be ahead.

A Nation in Flux

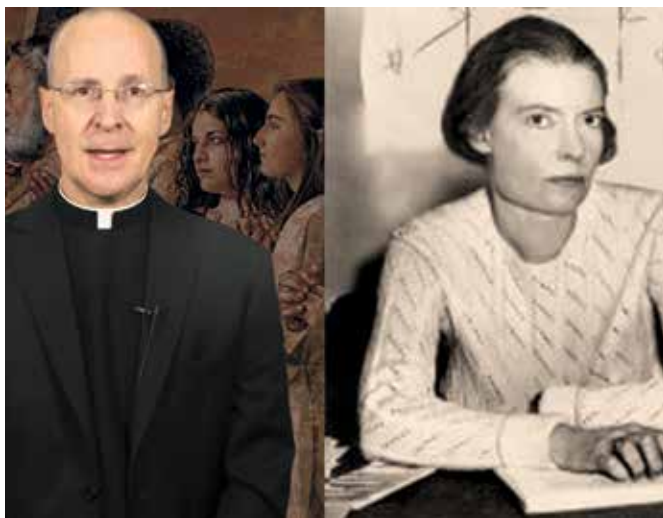
Different as these three stories are, they all tell us something important about where we are as a nation and as a nation of believers and unbelievers. The ground under our feet is shifting both religiously and politically. New movements rise and new power brokers emerge. We need reporters to help us first name and then understand what is happening. Reporting is a specific kind of storytelling. Facts are powerful. Opinions often serve to protect. Facts reveal. They can advance a story and open us to the truth.

And yet, trust of “the media” is at a historic low in the United States. I am not sure I know what “the media” is—more often than not I find that people do not know that reporting and opinion journalism are not the same. Only four in 10 Americans trust the mass media to report the news fully, accurately and fairly, according to Gallup. Some polls have it even worse, at 6 percent. Forty years ago, that trust was far higher, at more than seven in 10. Anecdotally, I find that the fear of media and reporters is often strongest among religious communities. More often than you would imagine, I am at best an outsider, at worst an enemy

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PODCAST

America’s Los Angeles correspondent, Jim McDermott, S.J., talks to Kerry Weber and Matt Malone about religion and television.

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who cannot understand them.

My job as a reporter is to learn stories that, almost always, are not my own. Truth is hard. Sometimes reporting is hearing what people may not hear in themselves. Other times it is staring into the atrocities a person has committed. Sometimes it is just fighting to figure out what happened versus what people want to think took place. Power has always had a convenient relationship with truth. It is easy to encounter stories we like or understand. Stories that challenge our trust or experience are easier to dismiss.

People often ask me how faith informs my work. I ask myself a different question. I am more curious about how the stories I encounter, the people I meet, help me better understand what it is to be human. Reporting tracks that in all its messiness.

I have sat with Sybrina Fulton, not long after her son Trayvon Martin was shot and killed, as she prayed that God would use his death to overcome racism in America. "He's in heaven with God—and he has on a hoodie, he has on a heavenly hoodie," she said.

I have listened to 18-year-old Mohamed and his sister Sara

tell me why they bought pepper spray for their mother, a substitute school teacher who wears a hijab, after the Paris terrorist attacks. "I see my mother. Everyone else sees a terrorist," Mohamed said.

I have watched as Tom Catena, a Catholic surgeon in Sudan, who runs the only hospital for one million civilians trapped in the fighting of the Nuba Mountain region, showed me photos of burned children and legless women hit by Sudanese government forces. "It is not any different than what is happening in Syria," he said of the conflict. "It just has been going on three decades longer."

And I have listened to Ali Karti, the Sudanese foreign minister, grow angry when I showed him those same photos, heard him deny they were real and dismiss documented Sudanese government rape camps as lies. "Nothing of that is happening," he said. "I deem myself of follower of Jesus."

Once you know the heart's beat, its aches and loves can take deeper shape. And in all of this messiness, the very human approaches the very sacred. The heart of the world is holy ground. I think of St. Augustine, who said, "The very same person is at once God and man, God our end, man our way."

The question of a reporter's faith raises all the questions of the limits of identity politics: Can a white man really cover race riots in Ferguson? Is a woman best able to understand child care issues? Does a millennial best know the experience of young people? Can an atheist ever accurately write best about the Catholic Church?

Those are all ways of asking a different question: Is it ever possible to know, to really encounter, the reality of the other? Is bearing witness, in all its complexity and risk, possible? Is anyone able to get close to the heart of the world? My job is just to try. After all, who am I to deem something, someone, unworthy of my witness?

Stories do not end when I put down my pen. They begin. Then, the decision to bear witness is yours. Benjamin Britten, a British composer, once mentioned the Holy Triangle of music, a holy trinity if you will, of composer, performer and listener. Music, he said, demands the effort and participation of all three. I think there is a similar holy triangle for journalism—reporter, subject and listener. That means that the reporter's work needs you. And I would not be surprised if that effort involves the old prayer, "Lord, I believe. Help my unbelief."

Anything more than that I leave to the theologians. There are heartbeats to follow, humans to meet, a world to approach, stories to be told.

The question of a reporter's faith raises all the questions of the limits of identity politics: Can a white man really cover race riots in Ferguson?

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Spiritual Costs of Debt

Financial servitude is shaping the faith of young American Catholics.

BY SEAN SALAI

When Alicia Torres graduated with a bachelor's degree from Loyola University Chicago in 2007, she had \$94,000 of debt from student loans. She also had \$1,000 in credit card debt from personal expenses.

Alicia found herself living a lifestyle that had become common among young Catholic college graduates. Working happily at a low-paying job for the Archdiocese of Chicago, she was unable to pay off her student loans, as her salary barely covered basic living expenses like rent and food.

Meanwhile, God was calling her to another commitment in life, to a vocation she had begun to discern during her junior year of college. Alicia felt a growing desire for something greater than material possessions. But a lack of connection between her spiritual life and fiscal habits held her back. As she struggled with expenses that plunged her deeper into debt, she began to ponder where her life was headed.

"I knew I had to stop living in limbo and listen to that voice speaking in my heart," Alicia wrote on her blog.

Alicia ultimately discerned a call to join a new Franciscan community dedicated to comforting the afflicted and preaching the Gospel in Humboldt Park, one of Chicago's most distressed neighborhoods. In July 2008, after making an Ignatian four-day retreat to pray about it, Alicia resolved to pay off her debt and join the Franciscans, come hell or high water.

"From that point on, I never looked back, and the Lord continued to work miracle after miracle so that I could enter religious life," says Sister Alicia.

Since the fledgling religious order of the Franciscans of the Eucharist of Chicago could not take on Alicia's debt, she decided, with the help of friends, to develop the Nun Run Blog—a fundraising idea that solicited sponsorships for Alicia to run the city's half marathon in 2009. As she slowly paid off her credit card bills, she set out to promote her "nun run," hoping to attract benefactors to help pay off her debt. Alicia's story was quickly picked up by media outlets around the world. Donations poured in at near-miraculous speed.

KITCHEN DUTY. Alicia Torres, a Franciscan sister, works with a seminarian preparing dinner at a rectory in Chicago in 2012.



In autumn 2010, her debt finally paid off, Alicia gave away her wardrobe and other possessions. She professed first vows on Oct. 13, 2012, and her final vows three years later. Now she spends her days working with children, families and seniors on the West Side of Chicago while taking classes at Mundelein Seminary to prepare for teaching religion classes one day.

"I can never forget what the Lord has done for me, nor the generosity of countless men and women," Sister Alicia

wrote. “My story is a testimony not only to divine providence, but to the steadfast love of God Almighty.”

Vocations Delayed

As Sister Alicia’s story illustrates, the spiritual cost of debt manifests itself in at least two ways for young American Catholics today: It delays vocations, and it puts strains on the bonds of love within families and religious congregations. But her story also shows how God is with us in the midst of struggles and weaknesses.

According to a study published by Georgetown University’s Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate in January 2014, Sister Alicia is not the only one whose path to religious life was obstructed by financial debt. The survey polled 107 men and women who professed permanent religious vows in 2013. One in 10 religious brothers, seminarians, sisters and nuns reported that educational debt delayed their application for entrance to religious life by an average of two years. Although these numbers may not seem high, these religious men and women also had an average \$31,100 in educational debt when they first applied for entrance to their religious institute—much more than their parents’ generation.

In 2012, CARA published a study for the National Religious Vocation Conference that gives an even clearer picture of the effects of educational debt on religious vocations. That report surveyed a total of 47,113 men and women religious with permanent vows, or approximately two thirds of all men and women religious in the United States. Unlike the 2014 report, this earlier survey also covered young Catholics who had inquired about a religious vocation, not just men and women who had taken vows. The study’s findings suggest that financial debt not only delayed some young Catholics from entering religious life but prevented many of them from applying at all, because either they or the religious institutes decided against it. Overall, religious institutes with at least one serious vocation inquirer in the previous 10 years reported to CARA that 32 percent of the inquirers had educational debt at the time of their first contact with the vocations office.

Religious institutes vary in their capacity to handle the debt of applicants. CARA found that slightly fewer than half of all formal applicants with educational debt were eventually accepted into candidacy or postulancy, as only four in 10 religious institutes took on the responsibility of paying off the educational debt of new members. Sister Alicia Torres may have been unusual in being delayed by debt from entering religious life; but many young Catholics, unable to pay off their debts, never even reach the point of entering.

An Illusory Crisis?

Despite these statistics, not everyone believes young people today are suffering unduly from financial debt or that social units like families and religious institutes are being unduly burdened.

In June 2014, the Brookings Institution released a study that said college debt levels have been relatively stable since 1989, calling into question the conventional wisdom that U.S. college students are now paying too much to enter a job market that cannot support them. The study reported that about one quarter of the increase in student debt since

1989 was caused by students’ seeking further education—especially graduate degrees—rather than by costlier undergraduate student loans. The average debt of borrowers with a graduate degree more than quadrupled, from just under \$10,000 to more than \$40,000. By contrast, the debt of borrowers with only a bachelor’s degree increased by a smaller margin, from \$6,000 to \$16,000.

But the Brookings survey goes back only to 1989 and does not

provide an explanation for the real shift in college expenses that occurred in the previous two decades. In the 1980s, American four-year colleges hiked their tuition by astronomical rates, gradually making it impossible for young people to “pay their way through college” as their parents did. Although tuition hikes have slowed since 1989, they continue to outpace inflation, moving students even further from the possibility of a debt-free education.

Matthew Plomin, 36, a married Catholic father of five, is a debt analyst for Deutsche Bank in New York City. He says studies like the new Brookings survey, which he considers misleading, have led young Americans to underestimate the burdens of debt: “Debt has caused a statistically significant number of young people to delay household formation.” He adds: “The rise in educational debt is not solely attributable to the cost of tuition, but the wide and guaranteed availability of federally insured debt prevents individuals from making difficult choices regarding the lifestyle they choose to live while in college. Easily obtained debt allows for lavish lifestyles, increased materialism and less introspection about how to wisely use one’s resources.”

“To a large degree, colleges and universities are engaging in potentially predatory practices, encouraging maximum indebtedness with their aid policies, especially with ads promoting student loans,” Plomin suggests, adding, “The morality of bankruptcy notwithstanding, there is no legal remedy for student loans, making a heavy burden even heavier for those with severe financial difficulties.”

**Debt creates new
relationship structures
within families based
on guilt and co-
dependence rather
than on love.**

Family Strains

Apart from restricting life choices among young Catholics, debt also creates new relationship structures within their families based on guilt and co-dependence rather than on love.

Mark Shea, a Catholic author and blogger, says his own family has suffered from the strain of older generations continuing to support younger generations well into adulthood. “I’ve watched my kids struggle with debt,” Shea says. “It’s spiritually crushing and tremendously anxiety-producing, putting strains on marriages and families.” Shea also notes that the increased debt load of young Catholics contributes to ever-increasing work hours that keep spouses apart, keep parents away from their children and tear at the bonds of love so essential to Christian family and community.

“Middle-class wages have stagnated, and a lot of money goes to child care when both parents are working all the time,” Shea adds. “Civilization is only possible when you have enough leisure time to ‘screw around,’ which debt eats into by making people slaves to the economic machine.”

Shea and his wife have four children between the ages of 17 and 27, but they had no comparable experience of financial debt in their own youth. That is because college tuition costs were still relatively low in the late 1970s and early 1980s. When Shea started college in 1976 and graduated in 1983, after taking a couple of years off, his parents paid half the cost while he paid the other \$4,500 by getting a job. With a total bill of about \$9,000, he was able to graduate from college with no debt—unlike his children, who have had to take out loans.

“Debt eats into everything, and the system seems to be designed to create that,” says Shea. Far from finding a job that will pay for tuition, today’s college student is lucky to find a minimum-wage gig at the school library that will pay for a semester of transportation and food. If a young Catholic fails to find a job after college, he or she may ultimately end up back on mom’s couch, trapped in a spiritual and psychological funk as student loan bills start coming due.

Then again, there is always the prospect of another loan to attend graduate school, which at least delays the undergraduate loan payments and holds out the hope of better employment.

As the Catholic writer Hilaire Belloc predicted a century ago in *The Servile State* (1912), it is becoming increasingly apparent that our society “cannot endure” under the strains of financial insecurity and anxiety that capitalism deepens as it concentrates ownership in the hands of a few. But while the ailing system continues to tighten its grip on the working poor and middle class, there are perhaps signs of hope in the high debt levels that afflict the spiritual lives of young American Catholics today.

First, it puts them in solidarity with the rest of the world,

where people suffer far more deeply. Second, it presents a challenge that will make them stronger people if they work with God’s help to overcome it. In his apostolic exhortation “The Joy of the Gospel,” Pope Francis condemned the self-satisfied complacency that allows us to ignore the plight of the poor, emphasizing that suffering often engenders compassion where prosperity creates only a “globalization of indifference.” Francis added: “The culture of prosperity deadens us; we are thrilled if the market offers us something new to purchase; and in the meantime all those lives stunted for lack of opportunity seem a mere spectacle; they fail to move us.”

For American Catholics accustomed to lives of relative comfort, struggling with debt can awaken them to the suffering of those unable to meet even basic needs—and to their own need for God’s help. Like many young Catholic graduates affected by this pursuit of prosperity, Sister Alicia Torres felt the deadening spiritual costs of her school and credit card debts. Yet through her faith, she found a way to work as if everything depended on her, while praying as if everything depended on God.

“The most important thing for me is that the debt actually became a way that I learned to trust in God, his love for me and his plan for my life,” says Sister Alicia. “The Lord used my debt to prove his love for me.” For in Christ’s love, all debts are paid. ▲

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Payday Predators

Protecting our most vulnerable from debt is an act of mercy.

BY EDWARD J. WEISENBURGER

In imitation of our Master, we Christians are asked to confront the poverty of our brothers and sisters, to touch it, to make it our own, and to take practical steps to alleviate it.

—Pope Francis

Pope Francis designated 2016 as the Jubilee Year of Mercy, urging the church to move the alleviation of poverty to the heart of our efforts with renewed zeal. In response, the bishops of Kansas, along with the staff of the Kansas Catholic Conference, undertook a careful survey of the more pressing social issues of our state. We concluded that among the structural evils affecting the poor, predatory lending—also known as payday lending—stands out as especially cruel. Like a cancerous tumor, it has grown swiftly, and it is dehumanizing to its victims—all while creating barely a ripple of public interest or concern.

To understand how we got to this point, first recall that from the beginnings of civilization, there have been teachings and laws against usury. Abusing the poor by lending money to those in crisis at astonishingly high interest rates is a practice that has been restricted or condemned by every civilization. Such behavior was rightly recognized as destructive and corrosive for communities and society. Moreover, from biblical times, one of the hallmarks of a jubilee year has been the cancellation of debts that were beyond the ability of the poor to pay. Liberation from the psychological and material “prison” of indebtedness is the perfect metaphor for God’s mercy.

Even given our nation’s secular history, legislation preventing usury was a natural part of our legal system until very recently. It was only in the 1990s that subtle changes in the law quietly and quickly eroded legal protection from usury. The result is a billion-dollar industry now advertised as friendly, safe and legitimate; indeed, it is actually presented as an altruistic financial service. The fact is that nothing could be further from the truth. So what is the truth?

Here are the facts. Payday lenders take advantage of a state of desperation experienced by those in dire financial circumstances. It is this sense of crisis that causes those (often with little financial understanding and few other options) to initiate an unseen cycle of debt from which it

quickly becomes virtually impossible to escape. In 1995, there were 37 payday loan entities in Kansas; by 2014, this number had grown to 347. Sadly, Kansas has one of the highest payday loan use rates in the country: 8 percent of the adult population. This means that 175,000 of our family, friends and neighbors are ensnared by payday debt.

Unlike more mainstream and regulated financial products (like loans from banks or savings and loan institutions), most payday loans provide scant consumer protection. The average loan is \$300 and must be repaid within two weeks, when the borrower receives his or her next paycheck. The fees charged for the loan are equivalent to an annual percentage rate of over 300 percent. More than 80 percent of loans cannot be repaid within this time period. The result is typically a loan that ends up with doubled or tripled fees. The initial sum constitutes more than a third of the average borrower’s disposable income, leaving even less money to pay for basic human needs such as food, housing, transportation to the place of employment and utilities.

Who is most at risk? No one is more vulnerable to the catastrophic consequences of “ballooning” fees than those who live on fixed incomes or who have been designated by social services agencies as highly at risk and unable to secure additional income because of advanced age, disability or some other critical circumstance. In 2014 there were 1,006,388 payday loans made to Kansans, totaling almost \$392 million. Based on national averages, tens of thousands of these loans were made to Kansans who earn less than \$20,000 per year. Roughly 30,000 of the poorest borrowers depend upon Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, disability benefits or Social Security as a major or even the primary source of income. What this means is that a substantial number of our Kansas tax dollars are being funneled through the poor and into the pockets of the payday loan industry!

Moreover, 53 Advance America outlets in the state of Kansas alone are owned by Salinas Pliego, a Mexican billionaire. Not only are Kansas tax dollars being funneled through the poor and into the pockets of the payday loan industry, but a significant amount is going to a billionaire



MOST REV. EDWARD J. WEISENBURGER *is the bishop of Salina, Kan.*

in a foreign country. More disturbing is that our poorest neighbors and co-workers, who legitimately depend upon every penny of public assistance to care for their children or sick family members, would have been required to pay an estimated \$10 million in interest and fees on those loans made in 2014. Each borrower paid an average of \$325. As the yearly limit for TANF is \$1,300, nearly one-fourth of this crucial, fixed income would be required just to service a loan.

While our research focused on the state of Kansas, it is worth noting that 14 states and the District of Columbia have outlawed predatory (payday) lending. The New Economy Project of New York estimates that these laws have saved \$3.5 billion annually that payday lenders would otherwise siphon in fees. It is also worth noting that the fed-



eral government has imposed an annual interest rate cap of 36 percent for military personnel and their families, after concluding that predatory lending was harming them to the point of undermining military readiness.

The same protection should be given to all U.S. citizens, but the predatory loan industry's lobby is powerful, and legislation is often gutted of any real power to protect the vulnerable. In Kansas, for example, it is illegal for a borrower to take out multiple, simultaneous payday loans, but with no structure in place to track payday loans, this law is entirely ignored. This already catastrophic situation is compounded by the ease with which predatory lenders now offer their services over the internet. And there is little relief from the federal regulatory agencies tasked with supervising the industry. This May, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau published preliminary new regulations of the industry, but they have numerous deficiencies, particularly concerning the verification of a customer's ability to repay loans while affording household necessities.

The Catholic dioceses in Kansas are taking steps to alleviate some of the damage caused by this structural evil. Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Salina and the Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas have initiated programs that provide financial mentoring for those who have become ensnared in predatory lending. These programs help victims to transfer predatory loans to legitimate banks and savings and loan institutions; the new loans, with drastically lower interest rates, are backed by Catholic Charities. Those previously trapped in predatory loans now have a realistic possibility of becoming debt-free. But we have hit two roadblocks. The first is that we obviously do not have the assets to back an unlimited number of these crippling loans. While making a difference, we can never alleviate so massive a structural evil on our own. The second roadblock, which was not anticipated, is the challenge of actually paying off the balance of a payday loan. The director of Catholic Charities in Kansas City in Kansas has spent hours struggling to pay off loans in person, only to encounter resistance from the payday lenders. When staff members attempted to handle these matters over the phone, they were repeatedly misdirected, placed on hold or given what was determined later to be inaccurate loan balance amounts. The industry seems to make every effort to prevent the loans from being paid in full. It's how they make their money.

If you're asking yourself, "What can I do?" my response is to look again to the words of Pope Francis, who asks us to confront and to touch poverty. To confront this situation begins with resisting the temptation to turn our eyes away from the suffering of our neighbors, or shrugging it off as the result of financial irresponsibility that has "nothing to do with me." The predatory lending industry very much wants us to look the other way—not to notice Lazarus at the gate. But confronting poverty like this begins with shining a light upon it. Then there are many ways to touch this particular poverty and to take practical steps to alleviate it. One is for faithful Americans to call upon national and state legislators to initiate true reforms providing the same consumer protections afforded to those who use banks and savings and loan institutions. We must ask for a special focus on those who are already considered particularly vulnerable to the false security advertised by predatory lenders on virtually every street, but primarily advertised in our poorest neighborhoods.

In doing so you will be taking part in our Year of Mercy effort to fulfill Pope Francis' request that we take practical steps to alleviate the unjust poverty that literally surrounds us. Surely this corporal and spiritual work of mercy is a perfect participation in this Holy Year of Mercy. What a fitting conclusion it would be if we could initiate the liberation of our poorest neighbors from this cruel shackle of crushing debt. **A**



Francis for the Poor

In his first meeting with the press on March 16, 2013, Pope Francis told journalists, “How I would like a church which is poor and for the poor!”

Since becoming pope, he has never ceased to look for ways to make that wish come true, starting with what he calls “the conversion of the papacy.” He began on the night of his election in the Sistine Chapel’s “Room of Tears” by refusing to accept the ermine-trimmed red velvet mozzetta, gold pectoral cross and red shoes prepared for the new pope, opting instead to keep his simple silver cross and well-worn black shoes.

This came as a surprise to many, starting with the cardinals who had just elected him. They did not know that as a bishop in Argentina he dressed as a simple priest, wearing a black suit but never the chain and cross under the jacket (with the former visible and the latter hidden), as many prelates do to show their rank. When John Paul II named him cardinal, he did not buy new robes; instead, he asked to have his predecessor’s garments reworked to fit him.

He surprised the electors, too, when immediately after greeting the people in St. Peter’s Square for the first time as pope, he rejected the limousine that was waiting to take him back to his residence and opted instead to ride with the cardinals in a bus. The following morning, he asked to be driven to the Basilica of St. Mary Major in a

small economy car, not in one of the bullet-proof Mercedes-Benz limousines that were ready for his use. Ever since, he has used a small economy car, even on foreign trips, as we saw in the United States.

Across the globe, the rich and people in positions of power emphasize their status by using luxury brand cars. Francis has always refused such status symbols. On becoming archbishop of Buenos Aires in 1998, he sold the big car that his predecessor used and found a new job for the chauffeur. As pope, he has frequently railed against clergy or religious who drive in the latest model cars, denouncing it as “a scandal” and an offense to the poor.

Soon after his election, he announced his decision not to live in the Apostolic Palace as his predecessors had done since the 17th century but to remain instead at Casa Santa Marta, where he lives in three rooms: a living room, a small study and a small bedroom.

His decision shocked many in the Vatican but not those who knew he had done likewise in Buenos Aires, where there was a large official residence for the archbishop at Olivos, near that of the country’s president. As archbishop, however, Jorge Bergoglio never lived there, not even for one day. Instead, he lived in the diocesan curia near the cathedral, in a small study and bedroom.

Likewise, Francis has not spent a single night in the papal summer res-

idence at Castel Gandolfo, where most of his predecessors since Clement VIII (1592-1605), who bought the property, had taken refuge from the Roman heat in the summer months. “The poor do not live in palaces,” he told a person close to him during his first summer in Rome. Last October, the Vatican announced his decision to open the summer residence to the public, who can now visit it all year round.

The pope has always refused luxury cars and other such status symbols.

Francis clearly would like cardinals, bishops and priests to use small cars and live in modest residences. He is seeking to inspire them by example, and an increasing, though still small number are following suit. Many, however, are resistant to this and sev-

eral say: “He is a Jesuit. He has taken a vow of poverty, but I have not.” But for Francis, it is a question of coherence to the Gospel message and the option for the poor.

“The riches of the church are meant for the service of the poor,” he has stated several times. He wants those administering the Vatican and local church finances to bear this in mind and not to misuse or waste them. In Rome, he has given a broad mandate to the papal almoner, the Polish archbishop Konrad Krajewski, to use Vatican resources for the poor. He has asked religious orders to review their use of the properties they own. In all this, he is challenging church leaders in a big way.

GERARD O’CONNELL

GERARD O’CONNELL is *America’s* Vatican correspondent. *America’s* Vatican coverage is sponsored in part by the Jesuit communities of the United States.

Correction Course

The benefits of prison education

BY DONALD LEE

In 1992 I was a 17-year-old college student studying at Phoenix College. Two years later I began a different sort of education, this time at “convict college.” I was serving a sentence for possession of drug paraphernalia, which turned out to be only an introduction to many years—and advanced degrees—of criminal behavior.

That same year, in an attempt to boost voter approval and cut government spending, President Clinton signed the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, which bans prisoners from receiving federal educational funding assistance, like Pell grants. Since that time, the number of inmates able to earn a college degree has dropped dramatically. Prisons across the country have cut back on “costly” education in favor of supposedly “cost-effective” programming—mostly idle time, spent in cells—and are quickly becoming nothing more than human warehouses. The prevailing public sentiment seems to be: “Who cares? Prisoners don’t deserve such a privilege.”

Criminal behavior is a breach of the

DONALD LEE, an inmate with the Arizona Department of Corrections, is pursuing a bachelor’s degree in sociology.

victim’s and society’s trust, rights and safety; and for many people, especially victims and their families, exacting retribution feels right. But when we

A three-state study of recidivism conducted by the Correctional Education Association found that two years’ worth of correctional education reduced recidivism rates by an average of 12 percent. A meta-analysis of studies on the effect of post-secondary correctional education published by Cathryn Chappell in the *Journal of Correctional Education* in 2004 found that recidivism rates were on average 46 percent lower for inmates who took college classes than for offenders who did not.

But is this simply “rewarding” prisoners for their past misdeeds, or are there benefits for potential victims and taxpayers as well? A study conducted by the University of California, Los Angeles, School of Public Policy and Social Research in

2004 found that when it comes to discouraging repeat offenders, correctional education is nearly twice as cost-effective as imposing longer sentences. Each year approximately 700,000 prisoners are released, of whom roughly two-thirds will reoffend within three years. That is 476,000 people the state will have to re-incarcerate, at an average cost of about \$31,300 per inmate per year. And because the average offender commits 8.89 crimes per year, that is potentially millions of additional victims.

Reducing the recidivism rate by



consider the fact that the majority of prisoners will someday be released back into society, it is clear that mere vengeance can be self-defeating. If society wants to reduce the number of people victimized by crime, reason dictates that an inmate’s time in prison should be used to correct the antisocial behaviors that put him or her there in the first place. Only by lowering recidivism rates will our criminal-justice system protect citizens and lessen the fiscal burden incarceration imposes upon taxpayers.

even 12 percent through education could save taxpayers billions annually and prevent the victimization of hundreds of thousands of people. This does not even begin to factor in the multitude of societal benefits, like the reduction of insurance premiums due to decreased crime rates, the collection of taxes paid by working ex-offenders or the benefits to children and spouses of rehabilitated ex-offenders, who are less likely to be on welfare or to fall into generational criminality.

Rotten Fruit

Today many prisoners are corralled into cellblocks, where there are few opportunities for personal growth. Even more devastating is the fact that many young prisoners are immersed in a group of hardened “veteran” criminals, who only further corrupt and warp these young minds. When I first went to prison in 1994, I was introduced to the prison’s pervasive drug and gang culture, and my criminal tendencies quickly multiplied. By 1996 I had participated in my first stabbing, and by 2005 I committed attempted murder. How had my life become so meaningless and destructive in such a short time? Much of it had to do with

being isolated from positive societal influences, severed from my family and surrounded by a destructive criminal culture.


Jesus stated, “A good tree does not bear rotten fruit, nor does a rotten tree bear good fruit. For every tree is known by its fruit” (Lk 6:43). The recidivism rate in the United States has remained virtually unchanged over the past 30 years. Clearly, the current correctional system is producing rotten fruit.

Nurturing a rotten tree will not produce good fruit. Demanding education and rehabilitative programs within the U.S. prison system is the only way to uproot the rotten tree that currently stands. A little more than five years ago, Jesus planted a “good tree” within me. I am now drug-free, gang-free and Catholic. I am a college student and am nearly halfway to earning my bachelor’s degree in sociology, with an emphasis on criminology. In addition, I have founded a peer-based rehabilitation program called Inmate-Driven Rehabilitation Service, which seeks to provide prisoners with the rehabilitative resources and educational opportunities that the prisons fail to provide.

None of this personal growth, however, can be attributed to the state pris-

on system. My college tuition has come from a fund set up by the Catholic Peoples Foundation, a nonprofit organization based in Gallup, N.M. Without their support I do not know where I would be now. In fact, my positive efforts, and those of my Catholic mentors, are regularly thwarted by the prison’s staff, its policies and its general attitude of indifference. The Arizona Department of Corrections has policies in place that actually prohibit a large portion of its prisoners, including those in special housing units, from seeking a college education. These practices have devastating consequences. Most inmates give up all hope of achieving a better life outside of prison because it appears unattainable.

One of the best ways to give prisoners hope is to immerse them in work, education, charity and other programs that prepare them to enter the workforce and to support their families and communities. Removing all forms of rehabilitative tools, while simultaneously isolating prisoners from positive forms of socialization, is not only ineffective; it is a costly mistake, one that guarantees that U.S. prisons will remain full and that victims of crime (not to mention taxpayers) will continue to pay the human and financial toll.

Approximately seven million prisoners are released back into society each decade, to either reintegrate and become productive members of their community or to offend again. Recidivism rates remain unchanged decade after decade in spite of “tough on crime” laws. The root cause is that prisoners leave prison the same as when they entered or worse off. It is time for taxpayers to insist that their money be put toward cost-effective, quality services through performance-based funding. Prisons that act as human warehouses and criminal “finishing” schools rather than as correctional facilities are rotten trees. It is time to plant some new seeds in the U.S. criminal justice system. 

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Undercover Grief

I rarely watch reality television programs. (Right, I only watch PBS.) But one reality series has recently drawn my attention: “Undercover Boss.”

Each week a business owner travels incognito to a subdivision of the business and takes an entry-level position for several days. The employees know they are being taped by a television crew; they are usually told that the tape will be used as a training film. Constantly asking questions of the employees, especially the training supervisor, the owner can gauge the strengths and weaknesses of the firm on the ground. At the program’s end the owner reveals his or her true identity and doles out rewards (raises, paid vacations, scholarships) or punishments (remedial courses, occasionally dismissal) to the featured workers.

The moral character of the workers quickly comes into view. The viewer easily spots the industrious and the slothful, the polite and the rude, the friendly and the hostile. That waitress has an attitude problem. That efficient electrician should be running the Pentagon. But what is especially striking in these interviews between the masked employer and the employee is how often the grief of the employee takes center stage.

One woman in a real estate network reveals the challenges she faces taking care of her mentally ill sister and processing her grief at the death of her aged mother. A short-order cook breaks into tears as he explains how important it was to obtain his job

after being devastated by the murder of his father right outside their home. A subcontractor admits that worry over the illness and death of his child distracts him from his work.

Other griefs quickly surface: a painful divorce, a battle against addiction, a devastating bankruptcy. The disguised employers are often led empathetically into their own confessions of grief. The owner of a limousine service weeps as he recalls the pain of his failed marriage and the self-destruction wrought by his own years of drug addiction. A restaurant owner chokes up as she explains how a bankruptcy years ago had humiliated her.

At a distance “Undercover Boss” would seem to be yet another of the “gotcha” surveillance series in which employers and detectives root out dishonest or incompetent employees. But there is surprisingly little of that in the program. There is also little expression of the emotion prized in our omnipresent pop psychology talk shows: resentment. Training instructions on how to drive a limousine, carve a chicken or dismantle an electrical socket abruptly pivot into revelations about a recently deceased spouse or a friend’s addiction or the bankruptcy when the family lost the house. Questions of work suddenly shift into the suffering, often courageously endured, that brought this person to this job and that makes this person want to stay at or leave this particular business. The program is an unexpected forum for the human soul to

emerge in all its tragic memory, fear and hope.

Despite our claims to be a therapeutic society, the heartfelt expression of grief is rarely welcome. Our plunge into a lethal culture of opioid addiction is in part an effort to suppress rather than face and express sorrow over the death of a beloved relative or friend. In a voyeuristic culture, grief is quickly transmuted into anger and accusation.

The program is an unexpected forum for the human soul to emerge.

As Catholics in a moment of ecclesial decline, how do we mourn the demise of a parish or parochial school? How do we mourn the death of an entire religious subculture? And how do we place such grief in a sober act of hope?

In the Catholic liturgical year, November is traditionally the moment to express our grief as a community gathered in worship. The liturgy of All Souls Day roots us in the compassion of Jesus toward the bereaved, the Book of Wisdom’s promise of immortality and the glorious hope of the resurrection. Baskets of petitions near the altar name the dead we mourn and intercede for in the prayer of the faithful. The private visit to the cemetery, the flowers on the tomb and the rosary at the graveside tie memory and grief to our great hope for the kingdom where tears are no longer shed. As the skies darken, it is also the season to share with other Christians our loss, made more than bearable by the fortitude and perseverance granted by the Holy Spirit. “Sorrow built a bridge.”

JOHN J. CONLEY

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THEATER | DAVID STEWART

BUBBLING UNDER

Ben Jonson's 'Alchemist' is basic compared with the Bard.

Ben Jonson will forever live in Shakespeare's shadow. The recent production of Jonson's best-known work, *The Alchemist*, by the Royal Shakespeare Company, inadvertently demonstrates why. First performed in 1610 and full of then-topical political references, it is hard work for an audience today. Although few of Jonson's surviving works compare well with the Bard's, this one probably does so best. That the R.S.C. put on this show at the Barbican Centre, in the City of London, also added a touch of modern-day drama.

Jonson set his play in Jacobean London—in Southwark and Blackfriars—in real time. It represented the realities his audience was living through, and they would have recognized this at once. One of those realities was the insecure reign of James I, who had succeeded to the throne on the death of Elizabeth I in 1603, and who had survived a credible assassination attempt in November 1605, known as the Gunpowder Plot. James had dashed the hopes of his Catholic subjects, later widely accused (as were, by some, the Jesuits) of planning the plot. "The Alchemist" calls to mind the more subtle subplot of Shakespeare's "Macbeth," which explores the moral justification of the assassination of an unpopular king. Jonson could not manage the master's subtlety. Still, the bourgeois property-owner character in "The Alchemist," the wealthy Lovewit, a character who

is absent for most of the action, might have been intended to be a semi-flattering figure of the just and honorable monarch, whose underlings/subjects stood accused of all manner of delinquency. These were precarious times to be a playwright.

Another reality at which those Southwark audiences would have roared was the plague, a common disease in the early 1600s. Jonson's plot carries really only one strand: Lovewit abandons his townhouse during an outbreak, leaving his trusted butler, Jeremy, in charge. But the latter soon makes mischief. Renaming himself Face and working with two con-artist accomplices, Subtle and Dol Common, he makes the empty townhouse a place to prey on gullible London figures to

whom they promise wealth and power through alchemy, astrology and appeals to vanity. Moral collapse into anarchy is the result. Successive characters are all too ready to believe that their base metal can be turned into gold and all too willing to part with their cash. It all begins to fall apart, of course, as does the flimsy relationship among the three swindlers. In good time, the noble Lovewit returns and good order is restored. Yet the unfaithful butler appears to get away with his deception. Or does he?

Early-17th-century London could be a dramatic place to produce drama, as it is in the early 21st century, but for different reasons. Fifteen years ago, the R.S.C. made the controversial decision to move out of their unloved London base at the Barbican. The venue is an object of contention; it is a 1980s Brutalist complex situated in the City of London, the financial district known as the Square Mile, comprising two theaters, a concert hall, numerous performance spaces and apartment housing. In places, it feels like a post-apocalyptic nuclear shelter. The big theater was specifically designed for the R.S.C., yet they left in 2002, maintaining a permanent home only in Stratford-upon-Avon while mounting one-off, commercially attractive shows in the West End. More recently, abandoning their permanent, custom-designed home has seemed a comedy of errors, and now they are back. "They have their exits and their entrances," suggested Shakespeare, but the company that bears his name has agreed to stay in its concrete home until 2020.

The London production of



SWINDLERS. Siobhan McSweeney as Dol Common in "The Alchemist"



CON JOB? Tom McCall as Kastril, Ken Nwosu as Face, Mark Lockyer as Subtle in “The Alchemist”

“The Alchemist” begins with promising originality. A playful musical overture, played by live but unseen instrumentalists, sets the tone by sampling, *inter alia*, the theme songs of “Mission Impossible” and the James Bond movies. The candle-lit set is open and static (until the striking, brilliant ending), resembling a brown Dutch interior or still-life.

The parallels with our own vanities and gullibility are not rammed down our throats; again, the clever ending takes care of that. Yet this 400-year-old play does not allow us to forget how difficult it is to dismiss entirely those email scams from exiled princes and widowed benefactors in far countries who have named us in legacies or deals that promise us millions beyond our imaginations. What if, a little voice still says to us, this mail is unlike the others, and genuine?

When we went to the Barbican to see this play, the company seemed subdued prior to the intermission. The dialogue, at times turgid (suffering again

by comparison with Shakespeare), felt labored, and there was little of the stagecraft for which the R.S.C. is usually praised. In the manner of a sports team that has been given a firm tongue-lashing by their coach at half-time, they upped their game and were much more lively in the second half. It was all much funnier. There was an excellent theatrical explosion that, although you could see it coming, still made the audience jump.

It was a good directorial decision to cut almost 20 percent of Jonson’s text. It is sometimes held that Jonson’s prolixity came from his desire to match Shakespeare, but he tried to do it by volume rather than quality. He could not really write in iambic pentameter, let alone produce layers of meaning in a concise, nicely turned phrase. It has mostly been a strength of the R.S.C. not to rely on big stars, Hollywood refugees. Ensemble is a forte of this company. Yet Siobhan McSweeney, as Dol, and Mark Lockyer, as the eponymous alchemist, caught the eye, most-

ly undefeated by dialogue that cannot have been easy to learn, let alone speak aloud in a large auditorium.

And that ending. Purists did not like it, for it tinkered with the text. Jeremy the butler, played by the wonderfully nimble Ken Nwosu, stepped to extreme front-center, flourishing tickets for the play we had just watched. He recited the prices of the tickets as if to say, “You’ve been conned.” The irony that the house was less than full was hardly his fault. Behind him, the splendid set disintegrated to leave bare the behind-the-scenes bits and the crew, which we do not traditionally see. It has all been a sham, this said. But even that clever device, trying hard to vindicate Jonson, could not hold a candle, if you will, to how Shakespeare the master achieved this—“If we shadows have offended...” And so Jonson, candle-lit, remained in Shakespeare’s shadow.

DAVID STEWART, S.J., is *America’s* London correspondent.

A YEAR OF EXTREMES

AMERICAN MAELSTROM The 1968 Election and the Politics of Division

By Michael A. Cohen
Oxford University Press. 448p \$29.95

On Jan. 20, 1965, Lyndon B. Johnson took the oath of office as president of the United States. On that Inauguration Day he was at the pinnacle of his career. The previous fall he had crushed Barry Goldwater in the presidential election by winning more votes than any president in the nation's history. As he put it, "For the first time in all my life, I truly felt loved by the American people." Three years later his popularity had declined so dramatically that, according to Senator Stuart Symington of Missouri, "Lyndon Johnson could not be elected dog-catcher in Missouri today."

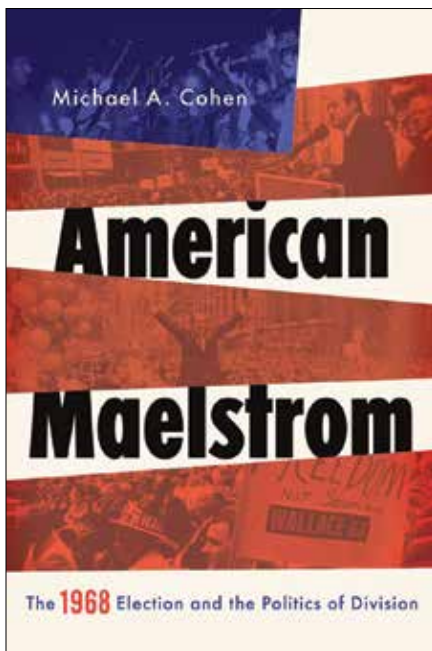
What did Johnson in was the Vietnam War. His stubborn support for the war in spite of overwhelming evidence that victory was impossible had fueled the antiwar movement. Protests against the war became so widespread that on March 31 Johnson appeared on television and shocked the nation by announcing that he would not run for re-election in November.

American Maelstrom examines the 1968 election by focusing on the personalities who sought the nation's highest office. The author, Michael A. Cohen, also argues persuasively that this election ushered in the politics of division that has shaped American culture for the past 40 years and more.

In 1968 nine men sought the nation's highest office. Four were Democrats: the incumbent Johnson, who did not last very long; Eugene McCarthy; Robert Kennedy; and Hubert Humphrey. The Republican party candidates were Richard Nixon,

George Romney, Nelson Rockefeller and Ronald Reagan. Joining them was George Wallace of the American Independent Party.

Cohen's discussion of how each of these personalities pursued the presidency is the most engaging part of the book. He brings each of them to life in a very readable and lively man-



ner. In doing so he provides the reader an opportunity to relive the events of 1968, a year that changed the course of American history.

The drama of 1968 began in November 1967, when Eugene McCarthy announced that he would run for president. In doing so he gave a prominent voice to those who opposed the Vietnam War. It was a courageous decision, and, as Cohen writes, "his decision...with no real hope of victory, ended up being the most transformative event of the 1968 election."

It was not until the middle of March 1968 that Robert Kennedy announced his candidacy for the presidential

nomination. He had been reluctant to enter the race for the Democratic nomination, but the Tet Offensive in January changed his mind. Striking at will across South Vietnam, the Viet Cong insurgency had convinced Kennedy that for the United States "a military victory is not in sight and probably will never come." For him the time had come to act. But within a few short months an assassin's bullet struck down the reluctant warrior.

As vice president, Hubert Humphrey was saddled with the pro-war policy of President Johnson. Because he was so closely identified with Johnson, he refused to distance himself from the president's stance on Vietnam until it was too late. As Cohen put it, "failing to stand up to Johnson on Vietnam would turn out to be Humphrey's greatest mistake."

Richard Nixon led the Republican candidates for president. Losing to John F. Kennedy in the 1960 election and then suffering another loss in California's governor election in 1962 appeared to mark the end of his political career. But a new Nixon emerged from the debacle of defeat. He "exhibited a self-discipline, energy, and single-minded devotion to winning the presidency" that would eventually propel him to the White House.

George Romney had a successful career as the three-time governor of Michigan. A "charismatic moderate," he seemed like the perfect presidential candidate for the Republican Party. But according to Cohen, he lacked "the ruthlessness to be a serious candidate for higher office." Moreover, he was politically too moderate for a political party that was steadily moving to the right. His campaign lasted only 100 days.

Another moderate candidate was Nelson Rockefeller, the successful governor of New York. He campaigned tirelessly, spending much of his own money to gain delegates. But the country's rightward political turn was

against him, and he was powerless to change it. Ronald Reagan, the governor of California, also entered the race for president. His “antigovernment, conservative populism” appealed to large numbers of Republicans, but his time had not yet arrived. Nixon had a stranglehold over the nomination and would ultimately prevail.

The wild card in the election was another governor, George Wallace of Alabama. He ran on the American Independent ticket and did surprisingly well for a third-party candidate. The candidate of law and order, he based his campaign on the racial issue. He sought to sow discord and fear among his listeners—fear of busing, fear of crime and fear of violence. Cohen describes him as a “political demagogue,” a throwback to the days of Joseph R. McCarthy.

The Republican convention was over before it began. The names of Rockefeller and Reagan were put in nomination, but Nixon swept to victory convincingly. In his acceptance speech he sought to give hope to “the millions

of Americans who felt the country slipping away from underneath their feet.” He wanted to restore the American dream by making America great again. As president, Nixon would never be able to realize that dream.

Cohen’s treatment of the Democratic convention in Chicago is one of the most vivid and memorable sections of the book. Inside the convention hall the old, Cold-War guard of the party were facing off against the antiwar activists for control of the proceedings. In Grant Park in downtown Chicago large numbers of antiwar activists were demonstrating. By early evening on Wednesday, Aug. 28, the rhetoric increasingly escalated, and the Chicago police, encouraged by Mayor Richard J. Daley, began to attack the crowds. In what has been described as a police riot, police clubbed anyone they could get their hands on, innocent bystanders as well as screaming protesters. Inside the convention hall, Senator Abraham Ribicoff, set to nominate George McGovern, departed from his speech and decried the “Gestapo tac-

tics on the streets of Chicago.” Mayor Daley’s Irish temper got the better of him and he screamed a vulgar, anti-Semitic diatribe at Ribicoff.

All of this, the rioting and Daley’s rants, was broadcast live on television as the nation watched in horror. The presidential historian, Teddy White, wrote in his notebook on that night “the Democrats are finished.” Finished they were. Hubert Humphrey, who gained the nomination in Chicago, went on to wage a strong campaign, but the outcome had already been determined on the streets of Chicago. Despite Humphrey’s valiant efforts, Nixon won the election.

Cohen concludes the book with a persuasive argument that “the ideological shift toward antigovernment and anti-elite populism” that emerged “in 1968 maintained its stranglehold over the country’s politics” into the 21st century. As one pundit put it, “It’s never stopped being 1968.”

JAY P. DOLAN is the author of *The Irish Americans: A History*.

Iphigenia Leaving Tauris

In the wind I lose the tumble of bone-white rocks
down the hillside in summer, a new lad missing
his footing or a goat scabbling for parched grass.

Instead I linger over receding mountains
that rush high and fast out of the water, the light
sweeping up from dark waves. My brother’s glowing face.

Over the heavy breath of men grinding oars comes
the slap of wet on wood, like the head of a Greek
that once slipped from my hands in the temple’s torchlight.

I’d searched his face for Mycenae’s wild hills, his prayers
for a warrior’s commands. But he was no king
to break on my altar at last. Just an old man.

What I remember of my father: curls, oil-dark;
rough linen; a loose sandal he gave me to mend.
His hand was a blade slicing the air in summons.

I too have held the knife. Before gods, we tremble
like sails, must stand like the masts of ships. My father
shed no tears. There are enough in this wine-dark sea.

CAROLYN OLIVER

Carolyn Oliver lives in Massachusetts with her family. Her work has appeared in or is forthcoming from *Slush Pile Magazine*, *Midway Journal*, *matchbook* and *Free State Review*. Links can be found at carolynoliver.net.

GOD TALK WITH IRONY

THE HIGH PLACES Stories

By Fiona McFarlane
Farrar, Straus and Giroux. 280p \$26

Fiona McFarlane's Anglican upbringing adds resonance to her latest book, *The High Places*, making what could be a humdrum collection of short stories with willy-nilly endings into mostly elegant little gems.

An Australian writer whose first novel, *The Night Guest*, received several prestigious awards, McFarlane writes stories with religious references ranging from terms like "burnt offering" to allusions to the Bible, along with speculations about religious belief.

A character who is a nonbeliever, for example, describes faith as a deep-down knowing, something one discovers rather than makes. And when one

loses that knowing, one prays to something one no longer knows, hoping to get it back.

There's God-talk in most of these narratives, but it's never cloying. McFarlane infuses her writing with a sense of irony and an instinct for poetry, as when a character describes the Holy Ghost as a "large feeling of singing toward something that sings back."

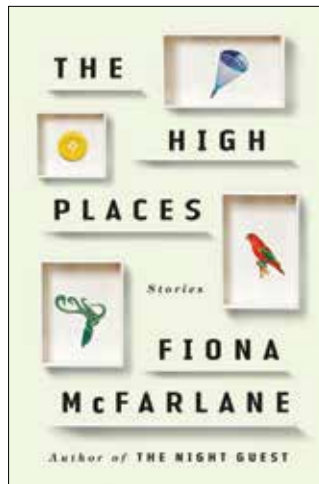
McFarlane's eccentric characters add offbeat perspectives to notions of spirituality. Someone might hear a ticking sound, for instance, and wonder whether it came from the "ivory

Jesus" crucifix on the wall. A character in "Those Americans Falling from the Sky" maintains "constant bird chatter to God on the subjects of rescue and redemption."

The Reverend Adams, in "Man and Bird," has visions of heaven so vivid that he has to rely on his parrot—

who seems suspiciously like the Holy Spirit and whom the narrator calls "that messenger of God"—to guide him. As the story ends, the white parrot "flew above the car, above the revolving earth, until finally, man and bird together reached the sea."

Whether they refer to the Holy Spirit or not, birds play an important role in these stories—perhaps suggesting the influence of Gustave Flaubert, whose short story "A Simple Heart" includes



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a parrot. In “Violet, Violet,” there’s a robotic parrot who has a direct line to the supernatural. In “Good News for Modern Man,” a marine biologist who talks to the ghost of Charles Darwin says he no longer believes in God and refers to his situation this way: “[I felt] God’s absence upon my shoulders, like a heavy flightless bird.”

Most of the stories are set in Australia, generally in the present. The characters live in a world enhanced by magical realism. The typical plot leads to a moment when someone changes, sometimes very subtly. In some circumstances, fate rescues them from their troubles. In other cases, the characters muddle through to an end that seems inconclusive. But it isn’t.

In “Art Appreciation,” Henry Taylor’s mother wins the lottery, and because he wants his mother’s approval and a large monetary gift, he decides to marry a suitable woman who takes art courses in order to better herself. But then he meets again the stunningly beautiful prostitute with whom he was previously involved.

Sometimes, the characters are allowed a slight glimpse into the meaning of their lives. As the book’s dust jacket suggests, Flannery O’Connor does something comparable in several of her stories that also offer split-second epiphanies.

In “Cara Mia,” a 14-year-old girl lives near a church whose cross lights up in blue neon at night. She has a crush on her mother’s significant other, and when he drunkenly mistakes her for the older woman, she, inspired by the light, does the right thing.

In “Mycenae,” a woman touring Greece is also inspired by light. After she is made to collude with her friend, who commits adultery, she stands under the intense sun and has a sense of the gods who had previously lived in and then abandoned this place.

These 13 stories were written over a 10-year span. A few stories fall flat with plot subtleties that seem too

elusive, but most are engaging and suspenseful. “Unnecessary Gifts,” the oldest story and one of the more traditional, is about a father whose sons temporarily go missing. When they’re found, he reflects on the fragility of life, especially as it concerns his elderly parents. The newest story, “Buttony,” about deception and how it brings out the worst in people, especially children, is a delightful re-imagining of Shirley Jackson’s “The Lottery.”

McFarlane told *The New Yorker* that she is “drawn to moments when people do things that are mysterious even to themselves.” The best-realized stories here are charged with these moments; and the title story, the last in this collection, is a near perfect example.

The main character, Jack, hears a Sunday radio broadcast about finding God. “Let’s think about it,” says the announcer. In the Bible, man met

God on elevated locations like Mount Ararat, the Mount of Olives, Mount Horeb and Mount Sinai. There, ancient people asked God for favors—which God granted.

Jack needs a divine favor. His sheep ranch is suffering from a five-year drought. But it is situated on ground below sea level with nary a mountain or even a hill in sight. How can Jack find God and make him listen to his plea for rain? That question drives the story. The answer is, he can’t.

Jack’s unnamed son, though, may be able to persuade God to send rain. Unfortunately, until the story’s mysterious ending in an Abraham-and-Isaac moment, nobody—least of all Jack—listens to the boy or understands what he means.

DIANE SCHARPER is the author of several books, including *Radiant*, *Prayer Poems*. She teaches English at Towson University in Maryland. Twitter: @bmorebooks.

MICHAEL C. MCCARTHY

SETTING THE WORLD’S AGENDA

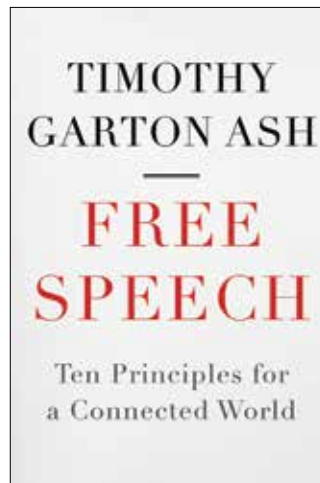
FREE SPEECH Ten Principles for a Connected World

By Timothy Garton Ash
Yale University Press. 491p \$30

Late in the summer the letter from the University of Chicago’s dean, John Ellison, to incoming members of the class of 2020 set off the latest set of skirmishes in higher education. The dean of students notes that one of the defining characteristics of the University of Chicago is a commitment to freedom of inquiry and expression. He cites a recent faculty report that encourages

members of the community to “speak, write, listen, challenge and learn, without fear of censorship.” Therefore, he explains to the entering class, the university does not support “trigger warnings” or the canceling of controversial speakers or anything that will inhibit the free exchange of ideas.

Critics object that Ellison’s letter begs a number of important questions. Do trigger warnings really compromise the value of free exchange? Do they really just coddle our youth? Or rather, do they help people prepare to hear new and potentially difficult ideas rather than simply recoil in shock? Nonetheless, support



from the University of Chicago's president, Robert J. Zimmer, was swift. "Free speech," he wrote in *The Wall Street Journal*, "is at risk in the very institution where it should be assured: the university."

This spring, at the commencement of Fordham University's Law School, Loretta Preska, chief judge of the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York, recited a litany of examples that, in her view, suggest free speech has been suppressed on college campuses. She warned new lawyers to be "wary of groupthink" and "the politically correct waves of the day." Censorship is not American, she said, and the history of jurisprudence in the United States consistently

champions the rights protected by the First Amendment.

While Timothy Garton Ash would not be unsympathetic to these views, his new book, *Free Speech: Ten Principles for a Connected World*, brings to the discussion a refreshing depth. Garton spent his early career studying movements within countries in Central and Eastern Europe, where Communist regimes clearly did suppress free speech in a systematic fashion. The inhibition of free speech is still a political and social reality, to varying degrees, throughout the world. Yet the pervasiveness of the internet has changed the game and made issues of free speech far more complex than they have ever been.

Ash calls this new condition "Cosmopolis," where an unprecedented number of people can fly from place to place and even more can access instant communication from distant lands. In 1919 Oliver Wendell Holmes famously stated that the most stringent protection of free speech would not protect someone who falsely shouts fire in a crowded theater and creates a panic. Nearly 100 years later, how would Holmes regard a raunchy, 13-minute film produced outside of Los Angeles and posted on YouTube as "The Real Life of Muhammad"? What Ash calls "malignant rubbish" is believed to have inflamed two million viewers, some of whom perhaps, Ash suggests, attacked the U.S. consulate in Benghazi, Libya, and killed the ambassador. Cosmopolis is its own crowded theater, and in this theater what we mean by "free speech" is not always clear.

The rise of the internet, however, does not just mean instant global communication among a vast number of groups and individuals. It also means new, and massively powerful, companies that have regulatory capacities akin to those of governments. Google, Facebook, Apple, Amazon—Ash calls these "big cats" who shape the current meaning of free speech together with the "big dogs" of sovereignties, like the United States and China. And because the United States is the biggest dog, it can frequently set the agenda for the whole world, often in contention with other big dogs like China or the big cats like Google, and often in ways that are responsive to aggregative power of end-users, consumers and citizens—in other words, us mice with access to the click of a mouse.

In the highly interdependent world of the Cosmopolis, social norms are usually more effective than laws. As highly as he regards those who invoke First Amendment jurisprudence, Ash is not overly optimistic at the capacity of legislation to protect or promote free speech, even in liberal democracies.



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Except in specific limit cases where, for instance, laws may protect citizens from extremist violence or whistle blowers from retaliation or children from internet predators, we should not look to courts or lawmakers. Rather we should “do correspondingly more to develop shared norms and practices that enable us to make best use of this essential freedom.”

The 10 principles Ash articulates in this book are drawn from a project he has led at Oxford University and published globally in 13 languages on free-speechdebate.com. Covering a topic of particular concern to the free speech debate—including violence, diversity, religion and privacy—each chapter begins with a single-sentence formula that is subsequently discussed with great subtlety.

For instance, regarding religion Ash

posits the principle: “We respect the believer but not necessarily the content of the belief.” That is, free speech must be exercised in a way that honors our fellow citizens but is not afraid of criticizing religious doctrines and practices. While such a principle may work for a secularist like Ash, he admits that to politicians in India, who operate in a context of religious density that includes Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims, the distinction between believer and belief makes less sense. As Ash notes, in their environment, the more operative principle might be: “Respect me, respect my belief.” Blasphemy laws were established in many countries precisely to keep the peace among people of diverse religious convictions. And yet, as Ash argues, while speech on religion will always challenge deep sensibilities and pose risks, the same speech will never

be truly free unless we adopt a principle like the one he articulates.

Ash’s discussion on religion, as on all other topics, is particularly fine because it leads us through a range of complicated problems with great sensitivity and tact. He models the mixture of openness and robust civility he argues we need in Cosmopolis.

This is an excellent, intelligent and comprehensive book that provides an elegant discussion of free speech and supplies a range of examples that help us see the costs, tradeoffs and tensions. Free speech is more frequently invoked as sacrosanct than it is presented as a matter for discernment. *Free Speech* is an important exception.

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Kingdom of the Son

CHRIST THE KING (C), NOV. 20, 2016

Readings: 2 Sm 5:1-3; Ps 122:1-5; Col 1:12-20; Lk 23:35-43

“He has rescued us from the power of darkness” (Col 1:13)

There is no Catholic civil war, regardless of what certain Catholic political pundits tell you. In fact, there cannot be. Our citizenship as Christians is a shared citizenship in the kingdom of God, what is called in Colossians the “kingdom of his beloved Son,” and here there can be no war. Perhaps this is politically naïve, but it is theologically true. Among us in the city of man, there are disagreements, arguments and worse, but if we believe that these threaten to rend the fabric of God’s family, we must remember that God “has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son.”

It is remembrance that is needed, for our shared baptism, our shared worship, our shared creeds and most significantly our shared king, which remind us that we are members of the same commonwealth. Our common legacy, since we have been rescued from darkness and transferred into God’s kingdom, is “the inheritance of the saints in the light.” It is God’s initiative that “has led believers into a new domain; their citizenship is now in a new kingdom” (Margaret Y. MacDonald, *Colossians and Ephesians*). The claim that we have been transferred from one realm to another, from one “power” to another, we take not as a leap of imagination, or a metaphor, or symbolic, but

as a reality rooted in Christ’s death and resurrection, into which we all have been baptized. Christ’s reign has been inaugurated.

The Greek word for “power” used in Colossians, *exousia*, which elsewhere in the New Testament is translated as “authority,” appears in Colossians as a designation for Christ’s sovereign rule over all other powers, human or spiritual (1:16; 2:10, 15). The “power of darkness” is the malignancy of human powers, and especially spiritual powers that seek not salvation but destruction. Jesus actually classifies his arrest as under this power: “When I was with you day after day in the temple, you did not lay hands on me. But this is your hour, and the power [*exousia*] of darkness!” (Lk 22:53).

But the power of darkness could not stop Jesus’ cosmic victory or the transfer of all those who grasp that victory into the kingdom of the beloved Son. On the cross, Jesus offered citizenship to the repentant thief who acknowledged his reign when he asked, “Remember me when you come into your kingdom.” As citizens of the kingdom, it is our constant work to be vigilant not to forget the victory that brings us into the church, which transferred us with a price from the powers of darkness to God’s kingdom. It seems an easy task, but it can be lost in the distractions of this world, in political campaigns, allegiances and allian-

es, in which we claim that the demands of human kingdoms are those of God’s kingdom, the wars of this world, the wars of God’s kingdom.

We need to remember that the kingdom of the beloved Son is where we all belong, together. Our king is “the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation,” who “himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together.” To speak of civil war among those who are brothers and sisters in this kingdom verges on denying Christ’s kingship. Jesus Christ the King “is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything.” Since through Christ’s victory “God was pleased to reconcile to him-



PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

Envision the King whom you worship with all your brothers and sisters. Do you consider your common citizenship with those in the church with whom you disagree? How can you create a lived sense of kinship even when you are at odds with others? How can you focus on the unity we share in the kingdom of the beloved Son?

self all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross,” we need to honor our brothers and sisters in the church by striving for understanding, seeking to create unity, not division, and working to mend our ways when we have harmed others. The peace that Christ gained for us does not render us free from the strife of this world, but there is not a civil war within the Church. The battle that Christ won was against the powers of darkness; it is not a battle fought against our fellow citizens. **JOHN W. MARTENS**

ART: TAD DUNNE

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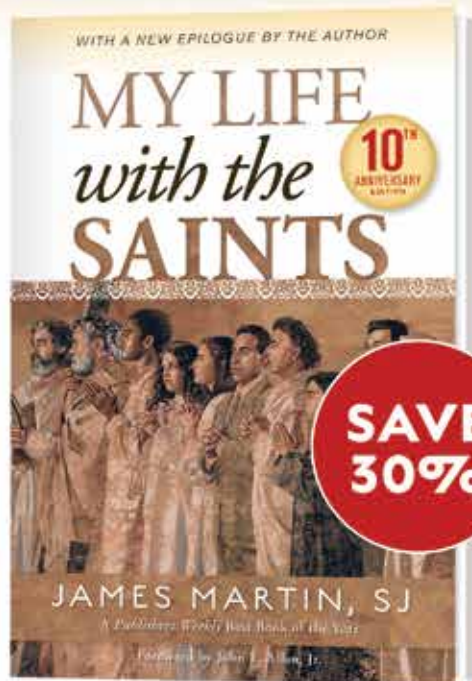
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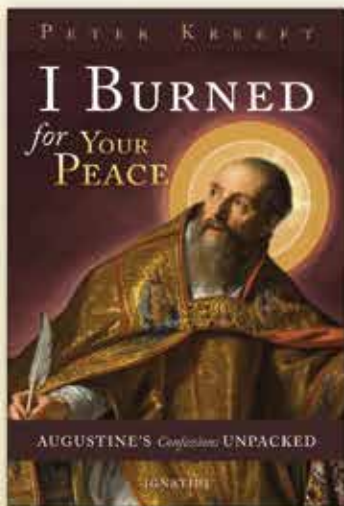
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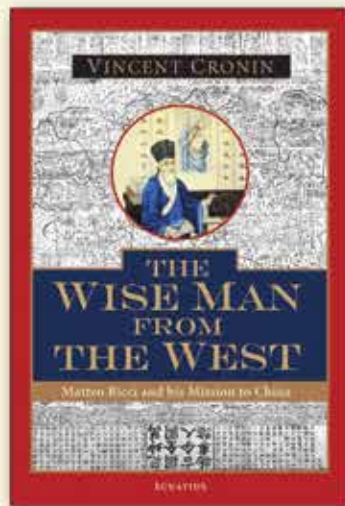
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