

America

MARCH 2021

THE JESUIT REVIEW OF FAITH AND CULTURE

DAYS OF REVOLUTION

*10 years after the Arab Spring,
what have we learned?*

Nathan Schneider

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CONVERSATIONS ON THE
CATHOLIC IMAGINATION:
WAR, PEACE, AND THE
CATHOLIC IMAGINATION
FEATURING PHIL KLAY AND PHILIP METRES IN
CONVERSATION WITH MICHAEL P. MURPHY

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Phil Klay is the author of the novel *Missionaries* and the short story collection *Redeployment*, which received the National Book Award for Fiction in 2014. His nonfiction work was awarded the George W. Hunt, S.J. Prize for Journalism, Arts and Letters in 2018. He teaches writing at Fairfield University.



Philip Metres has written numerous books, including *Shrapnel Maps*, *Sand Opera*, and *The Sound of Listening*. Awarded fellowships from the Guggenheim and Lannan Foundations, and three Arab American Book Awards, he is professor of English and director of the Peace, Justice, and Human Rights program at John Carroll University.

Right: Bookcover art provided by Philip Metres' *Shrapnel Maps*.



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DR. JENNIFER FREY

Jennifer Frey, Associate Professor of Philosophy at the University of South Carolina, offers this year's Newman Lecture, which invites scholars to recount their own discovery of the Catholic intellectual tradition in light of their ongoing research and thought. Dr. Frey's talk is titled "From the Rust Belt to Rome: The Conversion of a Working-Class Atheist." All are welcome!

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Politics in a Fallen World

“Sometime around 1700,” the late Kenneth Minogue observed, “a lot of people, particularly the intelligentsia, abandoned the [traditional, Christian] belief that we live in a fallen world and adopted the idea that we live, not in a fallen world, but in an imperfect society.” This shift away from the metanarrative of creation, fall and redemption, said Professor Minogue, ushered in modern political thought and the political idealism that accompanies it. By idealism the professor did not mean starry-eyed optimism. In the sense in which Professor Minogue used the terms, political idealists believe that imperfections in society are for the most part explained by our participation, willingly or not, in one or more systems, and that the work of perfecting society is mainly about creating better systems. In the 19th and 20th centuries, political idealism gave rise to various ideological programs for a more “perfect” society—those famous “-isms” of both the left and the right.

A fallen world requires a divine redeemer. An imperfect society just needs a better plan and better people to execute it. In a fallen world, redemption comes through the sheer gratuity of the redeemer. In an imperfect society, redemption is won through collective self-improvement.

You see the problem: Either way, human beings need some kind of messiah. According to traditional Christian theology, the messiah is the only son of the living God. In an imperfect society, the messianic role is played by someone else—more often than not, the nation-state.

You’d be forgiven for thinking that all of that is just a lot of academic

pabulum, perfectly suited to a leisurely conversation in the faculty lounge, but not terribly helpful in the business of daily life. Except that this shift in worldview matters a great deal—for how we view the world fundamentally shapes what we expect from it, as well as how we understand the possibilities and limitations of what we can do in it.

A case in point: I watched recently a very fine documentary on PBS about the life of George W. Bush. The program left me with the sense that, in spite of some significant and tragic mistakes, Mr. Bush is a fundamentally decent human being. He is also a practicing Christian, and his faith has had a profound influence on his personal and professional choices. And yet, contra the hordes of folks who think his faith had too much influence on his decisions as president, I am left thinking that his faith did not have enough of an influence—that it failed him at some critical moments.

It is in vogue in certain quarters to say that Mr. Bush lied to the country in order to justify the invasion of Iraq in 2003. I am not sure about that. Mr. Bush certainly said things at the time that were untrue, but something that is untrue is not a lie if the speaker believes it. I think he believed what he was saying. The consequential untruth that he spoke, moreover, was not first said to us but to himself. And that offers an enduring lesson, for it seems that this was a place where Mr. Bush’s faith failed him. A person with a deeper understanding of what it means to live in the world described in the doctrine of original sin might have asked questions that Mr. Bush seemingly did not.

A person more deeply aware of the human proclivity to self-decep-

tion might have asked whether he was lying to himself. A person more deeply aware of the human tendency to act in one’s self interest might not have been so optimistic in predicting the outcome, might have asked whether the war would inevitably be seen by the various Iraqi factions simply as an opportunity to further their tribal aims. Such a person might have asked whether the American mission, often described in quasi-messianic terms, was to liberate and to govern, or rather to purify. Governing is messy but doable. Purifying is clear-cut but hard, which is why the former is a responsibility borne mainly by human beings, while the latter is mostly God’s job. Mr. Bush’s shortsighted decision to ban former Iraqi army officers from serving in the new Iraqi police force, for example, hugely destabilized the country. But making the decision to allow the officers to serve would have required a leader who understood himself to be acting in what is often a morally turbid world—a place that sometimes requires you to tolerate things like having former foes in positions of power.

Human beings do great and beautiful things everywhere and every day; but we are also sinners, and that fact can distort our perceptions. In 2003 the country needed a leader who was less of an idealist and more of a realist—a realism rooted in the realities to which the Christian faith testifies.

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

A version of a portion of this column appeared in the Sept. 4, 2017, issue of America.



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CNS photo/Vatican Media

In his annual address to the Vatican's diplomatic corps on Feb. 8, Pope Francis said that the Covid-19 pandemic can be either a catalyst toward achieving a better world or a cause to further weaken a world burdened by global crises.

Cover: A man in Tahrir Square in Cairo, Egypt, holds the Koran in one hand and a cross in the other, Nov. 22, 2011. iStock

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Staying put in my parish

What are you doing for Lent?

Contrary to what it may have felt like, the last 12 months have not in fact been one long Lent. The church begins its annual season of prayer, fasting and almsgiving on Ash Wednesday, Feb. 17. Two weeks before that, **America** asked readers on social media what they planned to give up or take on this year. Below is an edited selection of their responses.

I plan on listening to a daily Mass podcast, spending time on meditation and being open to where God leads me. Last year, I made a point of lowering food waste, which I have happily cut down to very little. Usually the vegetable peels and unusable parts go to the compost. Also, I have managed to not use too many plastic bags. Whatever I do for Lent, I try to make it a positive shift in my daily lifestyle.

Maria Eichhorn

I think we did our penance in this pandemic.

Lenny Telesca

How about this: I'm not giving up. In spite of everything, I'm not giving up.

Letitia Roddy

I'm going to take on advocacy for racial justice.

Linda Morin Manning

I want to take on a better prayer life. I try every Lent. Hopefully I will do better this year with Father James Martin's new book, *Learning to Pray*.

Ann Marie Cangelosi

I am going to pray extra hard for those who have wronged me.

Barbara Terebetsky

I don't think I have the bandwidth this year. I'm just going to try to be a patient mom and get everyone through this.

Jane Masterman

Praying the rosary every day so I can get in the habit.

Dianne Fiore

Red meat, coffee and pop.

Mauro Pineda

Same thing I do every year, try to follow Jesus "...more nearly day by day"

Kim Mallet

Taking up book reading. Turning off the videos at 9 p.m. to read.

Pam Strobel

Working on being patient, and adding more music and art in my life.

Laurie Toubus

Less social media, more time in prayer

Len Kierzek

No chocolate and more rosaries.

James Bull

Participating in daily Mass livestream, working through a Memento Mori devotional and stopping stress eating

Kris Beckles

Lent? Haven't we been living in Lent since last year? I'm going to try to pray more, hopefully with the help of Father Martin's new book. As for giving something up? I don't have much left—can't see my sons and daughter in laws, can't see my grandchildren (including my brand new granddaughter), can't go to church (too many wearing their masks below their noses).

All I have left to live for is chocolate, and I think God will forgive me for hanging on to that for dear life!

Monica Soule



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President Begins Overdue Reform of Immigration

President Joseph R. Biden Jr. began his administration by fulfilling a number of promises made on the campaign trail. On his first day in office, the president issued an immigration reform proposal that includes a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants and a strategy to address the root causes of migration.

In a few short hours, the White House completely changed the tone of our national discourse on immigration. While campaigning and during his presidency, Donald Trump played on nativist fears by using the term *invasion* to describe the changing demographics of the United States. A positive tone is unquestionably a significant development in itself, but Mr. Biden has already demonstrated that he will go beyond mere words.

The new president signed eight executive orders related to immigration in his first two weeks in office. He also signed an order that restores the inclusion of noncitizens in the official U.S. Census count. Many of these actions are direct reversals of President Trump's anti-immigrant measures. These are important first steps, but immigration reform must move beyond executive orders.

Mr. Biden fully restored the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals policy, an Obama-era policy that protected from deportation undocumented immigrants brought to the United States as minors. While ultimately blocked by the courts, Mr. Trump had attempted to end this program, popularly known as DACA. President Biden also ended the Migration Protection Protocols, commonly known as the Remain in Mexico policy, which forced vulnerable asylum seekers who arrived at the southern border to wait for their

court dates amid precarious conditions in Mexico.

Mr. Biden also halted construction of the border wall, which Mr. Trump famously promised would be financed by the Mexican government. And Mr. Trump's travel bans, which barred travelers from certain nations with large Muslim populations, are also now a thing of the past. In short order, Mr. Biden used his office to reverse course on capricious immigration enforcement within the United States.

Under the Trump administration, immigration officials put into force a zero-tolerance policy on unauthorized border crossings that led to the separation of thousands of children from their parents at the U.S.-Mexico border. While the trauma this inflicted on families cannot be reversed, Mr. Biden did order on Feb. 2 the formation of a task force to reunite hundreds of families who remain separated because of the Trump administration policy.

On the same day, Mr. Biden ordered both expanded avenues for legal migration from Central America and measures to address the conditions that cause Central Americans to flee their home countries. And he issued an executive order to review policies introduced by the Trump administration to determine whether they meet the goal of promoting the inclusion and integration of immigrants into American society.

While the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has rightly voiced its differences with Mr. Biden's decisions related to abortion policy, the bishops have nevertheless applauded the administration for the many steps it has taken to improve the lives of immigrants.

"The Catholic Church teaches that each person is created in the image and likeness of God and that we must uphold

the inherent dignity of each person," the Most Rev. Mario E. Dorsonville, auxiliary bishop of Washington and chairman of the U.S.C.C.B.'s Committee on Migration, said in a statement.

"As a society, we must remain consistent in our openness and treatment of all persons, regardless of whether they were born in the United States or immigrated here," he said. "We know that changes will take time but applaud President Biden's commitment to prioritize assisting our immigrant and refugee brothers and sisters. We also offer our assistance and cooperation on these urgent matters of human life and dignity."

The U.S. government's anti-immigrant actions certainly did not begin with Mr. Trump. Since President Reagan signed the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, which legalized millions of undocumented immigrants, immigration reform has largely focused on enforcement and border security. Both Republican and Democratic leaders, for example, joined to pass the 1996 Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act, the 2001 Patriot Act, the 2005 REAL ID Act and the 2006 Secure Fence Act. And while Mr. Obama took some executive actions to protect immigrants, his administration unwisely escalated the number of deportations and began the temporary detention of unaccompanied migrant children in chain-link enclosures, which reached its appalling zenith during the next administration.

The Trump administration brought U.S. immigration policy to rock bottom. Mr. Trump's approach, in words and actions, was typified by cruelty. The administration appeared to be inflicting these inhumane conditions in an effort to break the spirits of

Founded in 1909

migrants and asylum seekers, believing that their suffering would cause them to abandon their efforts to enter the United States. Americans can rejoice that this cruelty has come to an end.

But the work is far from over.

As the Kino Border Initiative recently noted, there are still thousands of asylum seekers waiting on the southern border because of the Remain in Mexico policy. Its suspension by the Biden administration does not change the reality for those who are currently enrolled and still waiting. Mr. Biden must immediately end Remain in Mexico for those who are already enrolled and must end Title 42 public health restrictions on the border, a measure to which experts object.

Mr. Biden must also reconsider enforcement strategies from U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and U.S. Customs and Border Protection. As recently called for by Catholic bishops in border dioceses, the Biden administration must ensure that U.S. asylum law adheres to international standards. Mr. Biden must also take steps to address the paralyzing backlog of more than 1.3 million cases in immigration courts.

Immigration reform, however, must move beyond executive orders. President Obama and President Trump both had their actions on immigration reversed by their successors. Mr. Biden faces a much steeper challenge in working with Congress to pass needed permanent legislation on behalf of immigrants while safeguarding the future vitality of the United States.

This is just the beginning. Catholics and others who support immigrants may take Mr. Biden's first weeks of office as a hopeful sign of things to come. But we must also remain vigilant. Mr. Biden will need broad support from faith communities if he is to lead this country through the comprehensive immigration reform it so desperately needs.

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Are we headed for another Roaring '20s? And is there another depression at the end?

As Covid-19 vaccines become more available and pent-up demand for consumer spending finds a release, we may see a surging economy over the next two years. That is the assessment from economists at the U.C.L.A. Anderson School of Management, who compare the coming recovery to the economic surge that happened 100 years ago, remembered as the Roaring Twenties.

If the forecast is accurate, history may repeat itself in several ways. First, the 1920s came after a global pandemic, the Spanish flu, and there was a natural desire to celebrate the end of a tragic period marked by a massive loss of life. The 1920s also saw major changes in technology: the expansion of electricity, cars, telephones and telegraph service. Similarly, the 2020s, partly as a result of Covid-19, will see information technology continue to advance, with all sorts of implications for where businesses and families choose to locate. The changes will generate new opportunities for entrepreneurship and investment.

Of course, the first Roaring Twenties ended with the stock market crash of 1929 and the Great Depression, which lasted until World War II. The crash represented a failure of the Federal Reserve System, which had been created in 1913 in part to avert crises like the financial panic of 1907. The Fed failed to intervene in the highly speculative financial markets of the 1920s, and its monetary policies after the crash did little or nothing to spur recovery. In fact, in 1936 and 1937, the Fed even tightened monetary policy, increasing reserve requirements for banks and thus limiting lending, amid fears of inflation. The Fed's actions

nipped in the bud some small movements toward recovery.

These days, we have the recent memory of the global financial crisis of 2008. While the Fed did not stop that economic downturn, it is clear that the collapse would have been much worse had Ben S. Bernanke, then the chair of the Federal Reserve, not learned from the Fed's mistakes in tightening the money supply in the 1930s. His quantitative easing policy, under which the Fed bought government bonds and mortgage-backed securities to increase the nation's money supply, helped to rescue the financial system. This time, the Fed is purchasing much of the debt issued to pay for Covid relief to unemployed workers and to small businesses.

Opponents of the new Biden stimulus package have cited concern over the national debt, but while our debt as a percentage of gross domestic product is large (over 100 percent), the return of economic growth and the continuation of low interest rates can quickly reduce this ratio, as they did in the 1950s. The key worry: Is the increased money a ticking time bomb of financial instability once we recover from the Covid-induced downturn? This does not have to be the case, as the Fed has the tools to defuse such a bomb before it goes off. It just needs the willpower to do so.

Fortunately, President Biden does not seem to be as passive as Presidents Harding, Coolidge and Hoover. He has appointed a competent team for the economy. Janet Yellen, for example, is the first person to serve as secretary of the treasury after heading the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System. So we have someone in charge of fiscal policy who knows monetary pol-

icy and what it can do, as well as how to respond to the telltale signs of an economy that is overheating because of "irrational exuberance."

The original Roaring Twenties witnessed bubbles in both stock prices and property prices, with overinvestment and speculation. But we now know that inflation in financial and property markets can be as damaging as inflation in consumer goods; and in response to the global financial crisis of 2008, we have seen a re-regulation of the banking sector.

The Biden administration should increase federal spending to further its agenda for reducing income inequality and strengthening environmental protection. But the time may come for the Treasury Department and the Fed to be "party poopers" and take some steam out of the recovery through higher interest rates and tighter regulation of bank lending. (Mr. Biden could also decide it is time to increase federal taxes, though this is politically risky.)

As William McChesney Martin Jr., head of the Federal Reserve System in the 1950s and 1960s, once said, the task of good policy-making is to take away the punch bowl just as the party is heating up. This may be the challenge for the Biden economic team as we head into another Roaring Twenties: to know when and how to take away the punch bowl—certainly not too soon, but hopefully not too late.

Paul D. McNelis, S.J., is America's contributing editor for economics and a professor of finance at the Gabelli School of Business at Fordham University in New York City.

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CNS photo/Oscar Leiva, Silverlight for Catholic Relief Services

Can \$4 billion help reduce forces driving migrants out of Central America?

By J.D. Long-García

If you own a car in El Salvador, there is a good chance you pay gangs a monthly fee to keep it safe. It is just a fact of life, said Alberto Velázquez Trujillo, the director of Faith in Action in Central America.

You also cannot drink the municipal tap water, so you have to divert a good percentage of your income to bottled water. Then again, you might not have a job, so you will not be able to afford purified water.

The Biden administration vows to invest \$4 billion in Central America to address issues like these and other factors that push immigration to the United States. On his first day in office, Mr. Biden introduced the U.S. Citizenship Act of 2021, an immigration reform bill that includes aid to Central America. The bill proposes a policy approach meant to encourage private investment in Central America, supporting programs to improve security and the rule of law and to confront corruption.

The hope is that aid and investments from the United States will lead to improvements in everyday life for Central Americans, encouraging people of the region to remain in their home countries. It is a proactive strategy that in the end intends to alleviate the press at the U.S.-Mexico border of migrating people from the Northern Triangle nations of El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras.

President Biden will find plenty of advocates and hu-

manitarians on both sides of the border ready to help.

“Our goal has been and will continue to be to work with Congress to address the root causes of migration,” said David Cronin, a senior policy and legislative specialist with Catholic Relief Services. He noted that over the last few years under President Donald Trump, the State Department has cut hundreds of millions in U.S. aid to Central American countries.

Reversing the impact of the Trump policy on Central America will take some time. “Poverty alleviation does not happen overnight,” Mr. Cronin told *America*. “To attain sustainable development requires a long-term commitment of time and resources. We have not seen that [from the United States] in Central America.”

Conditions in Central America corroborate that assessment. El Salvador and Honduras have two of the highest homicide rates in the world, and more than 40 percent of children in Guatemala under 5 suffer malnutrition.

In 2020 two hurricanes within days of each other landed on already impoverished nations in Central America, leading to the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people, he said. “It becomes more difficult to maintain hope when you don’t have a home,” Mr. Cronin said. Formal and informal camps have been established for the people in the region dislocated by the natural disasters. Now Covid-19 is

complicating relief efforts.

Mr. Cronin acknowledged that Mr. Biden will have to contend with the realities of the pandemic in the United States, but he said aid to countries in need must remain a priority.

“It’s in the U.S.’s interest,” he said. “And it’s part of the moral foundation of who we are—to be good neighbors and hold up human dignity. Global problems require global responses.”

Dylan Corbett, executive director of the Hope Border Institute, has been working with a coalition of grassroots organizations and faith leaders to address the root causes of immigration to the United States. U.S. foreign policy has led to the current conditions, he said, so the United States should take responsibility.

On Dec. 10, the coalition sent a letter to Mr. Biden, signed by more than 300 faith-based and civic groups and 20 Catholic and Episcopal bishops, including Cardinal Álvaro Leonel Ramazzini Imeri of Huehuetenango, Guatemala, and Bishop Mark Seitz of El Paso, Tex.

“Families can only bear so much suffering,” Cardinal Álvaro Ramazzini said in a press statement. “The devastation caused by Hurricanes Eta and Iota is a direct result of climate change and failure to invest in basic services and sustainable development in poor and indigenous communities.”

He added, “It is immoral and shortsighted to punish people for trying to survive rather than sincerely addressing the underlying causes that lead them to leave the homes and communities they love.”

Bishop Seitz said the time had come to take another approach in U.S. foreign policy. “In every migrant seeking refuge at the U.S.-Mexico border, God is calling us to hear the cry of the poor and the cry of the earth in the Americas,” he said in a statement in December. “Jesus calls us to solidarity with the young people who cannot find work, the families terrorized by crime, the indigenous communities forced from their lands and the human rights defenders working to build a more just society in Central America.”

Though the Biden administration is expected to be receptive to their message, Mr. Corbett said church leaders and migrant advocates need to remain vigilant. “Biden has made positive overtures, but he comes from an Obama administration that focused on enforcement [of immigration law],” he said. “We need a fundamental overhaul of our foreign policy. We have to elevate addressing the root causes over criminalization, which has been deadly in the past.”

In El Salvador, Mr. Velázquez Trujillo was even more

cautious. “I don’t expect much change,” he said. “The time of Obama was not really different [from Trump’s]. I’ll start to have hope when I begin to see change.”

Elected officials in the United States need to hold Central American governments accountable for the funds they are given, Mr. Velázquez Trujillo said. “If Biden wants to help Central America, he needs more discernment about where the money is spent. If he just gives money to the governments [as they’ve done in the past], things will remain the same.”

In the meantime, Mr. Velázquez Trujillo is taking steps to enact change locally. His group organizes from San Francisco de Asís Church in San Salvador to provide water for their neighborhood. Mr. Velázquez Trujillo said 90 percent of the surface water in El Salvador is contaminated with sewage and industrial or agricultural waste.

The current minimum wage in El Salvador, about \$10 a day, is another issue that needs to be addressed, and Mr. Velázquez Trujillo described the nation’s health care and education systems as deficient.

Mr. Velázquez Trujillo and his group have been mentoring individuals he hopes will be future government leaders. He believes the major political parties are corrupt and do not represent the will of the people.

“We’re looking for [independent] candidates; that’s the idea,” he said. “That’s the only way we will bring about change.”

It is possible El Salvador’s legislators will attempt to block independent candidates with a new law, he said. And upsetting the current power structure could put Mr. Velázquez Trujillo and his organization in danger.

“We’re afraid, but I think that when the people speak, it is very difficult to act against them,” he said. “We always live with fear, but we cannot let ourselves be defeated by it.”

People in the United States, Mr. Velázquez Trujillo added, should hold their government leaders accountable too. At best, he finds U.S. Central American policy hypocritical.

The current indifference to the region’s socioeconomic and political woes will lead to more caravans going north. It means more cheap labor for the United States, he said, and just more poverty and violence in Central America.

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

Catholics are overrepresented in the 117th Congress, but where are the 'nones'?

Although Catholics make up about 20 percent of the U.S. population, they represent 30 percent of the 117th Congress, according to the Pew Research Center. Protestants still dominate with 55 percent of the seats in the House and Senate—they represent 43 percent of the population—but they are splintered into more than a dozen different denominations. That makes Catholics the single largest faith group in the House and Senate for 2021.

In the House of Representatives, 77 of the chamber's Catholics are Democrats and 57 are Republicans, accounting for 31 percent of the body's 535 members. In the 100-member Senate, 14 Catholics are Democrats and 10 are Republicans.

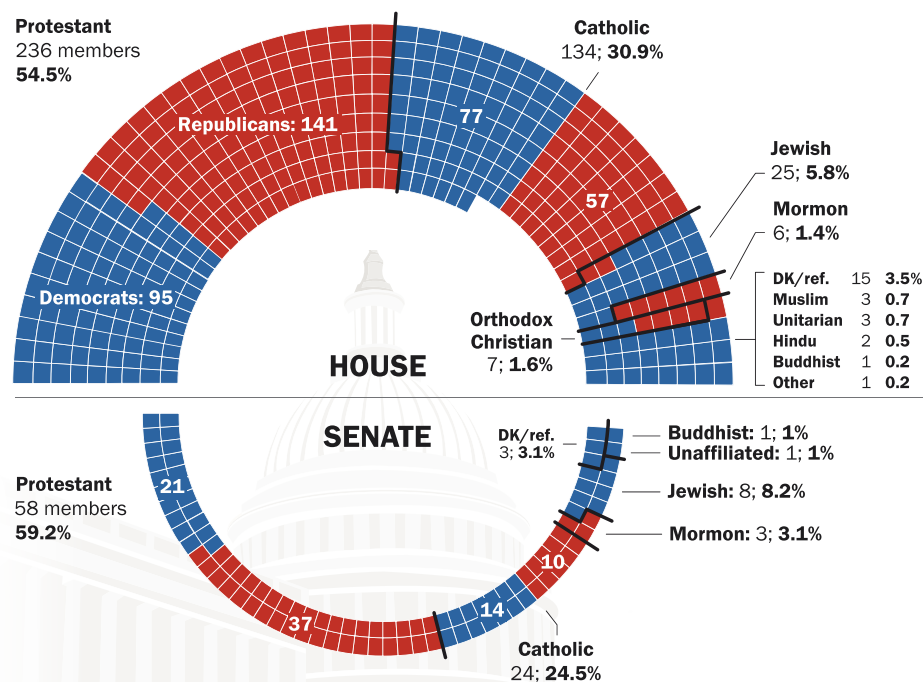
The Democratic Party is home to an overwhelm-

ing majority of the non-Christians in Congress. In the House, Democrats include 23 Jews, three Muslims and Unitarian Universalists each, two Hindus, one Buddhist and one "other." In the Senate, eight Jews, one Buddhist and one "unaffiliated" senator are Democrats.

By contrast, nine out of 10 Republicans in the 117th Congress are Christian. Two House Republicans are Jewish, and one Republican declined to answer Pew's survey. There are no non-Christian Republicans in the Senate.

Americans who are unaffiliated with any faith, often referred to as "nones," now constitute 26 percent of the population, according to Pew, but are publicly represented by only one member in Congress.

The religious makeup of the 117th Congress



Jesuit connections in Congress

For the third consecutive session, the alumni of Jesuit institutions account for about **10 percent** of the Congress. Among the **55 Jesuit-educated** members of the 117th Congress are **13** senators and **42** House members from **11** Jesuit institutions. They include Georgetown University, with **28** (including eight senators) alumni in Congress; followed by Boston College, with seven; Fordham University, six; College of the Holy Cross, three. Loyola University Chicago, Marquette University, Saint Peter's University, Santa Clara University and the University of Detroit Mercy each have two alumni in Congress; Creighton University and Gonzaga University each have one alum in Congress.

Nones not represented?

While **26%** of U.S. adults describe themselves as atheist, agnostic or "nothing in particular," just one member (0.2%) of the new Congress—Senator Kyrsten Sinema, Democrat of Arizona—self-identifies as religiously unaffiliated.

Catholic Capitol gains 1965–2021

House: **22%** to **31%**
Senate: **14%** to **24%**

Sources: Pew Research Center, the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities. Illustration courtesy of Pew Research Center.

The church steps up as disinformation turns Brazilians against Covid-19 vaccine

Vaccinations against Covid-19 were offered on Jan. 18 at the statue of Christ the Redeemer during an event hosted by the Archdiocese of Rio de Janeiro.



Fernando Frazão/Agência Brasil

Brazil is famous for having one of the most successful public vaccination programs in the world. Every year, more than 300 million doses of serums and vaccines are produced and distributed throughout the continent-sized country.

But during the Covid-19 pandemic, more Brazilians than ever have come to fear vaccination. The bishops' conference and at least two cardinals—Odilo Scherer, the archbishop of São Paulo, and Orani João Tempesta, the archbishop of Rio de Janeiro—have enthusiastically joined the pro-vaccine chorus to address that resistance.

“What we can do as a church is to make people aware of the importance of vaccination,” said Cardinal Tempesta. He even hosted a vaccination event at the feet of Rio de Janeiro's famous Christ the Redeemer statue. “The church wants the good of all. As soon as requested we will be on hand to help raise awareness. I am sure scientists and companies working to reach this great good that is a Covid-19 vaccine are doing the best they can.”

Cardinal Scherer told *America* that he was deeply concerned about “the controversy surrounding the vaccine against the coronavirus and Covid-19.” He said that while it is natural to fear the unknown, “resistance [to vaccination] may be linked to little information or to misinformation produced and disseminated for whatever reasons and interests.”

In a statement released on Jan. 6, the Brazilian bishops' conference wrote that “we cannot surrender to the indifference of some and the denialism of others.” According to the statement: “misinformation can lead to irresponsible actions.” The bishops asked for unity among public authorities, adding that “vaccines should be accessible to all.”

According to João Henrique Rafael Jr., a social media researcher at the Institute of Advanced Studies of the University of São Paulo, vaccine coverage has been falling in Brazil since 2015 because of an erroneous belief that some

diseases are no longer a major risk, but another contributor to vaccine skepticism has been a sharp increase in misleading information on the internet.

Alexandre Naime Barbosa, the head of infectology at São Paulo State University and consultant to the Brazilian Society of Infectology, explains that the spread of misinformation about vaccines in Brazil has been propelled by the federal government under President Jair Bolsonaro.

“The president has made some weird comments,” said Dr. Barbosa, “saying that he will not be responsible for side effects caused by vaccines, while scientific studies have consistently shown their safety and effectiveness.” The president, who survived a with Covid-19 in July, said that he “had the best vaccine,” the virus itself.

On Jan. 28, Brazil had registered 220,000 deaths and nine million cases of Covid-19. Numbers grew exponentially after the year-end holiday parties and traveling. The spike was especially hard on the Amazonian region, where the health system collapsed and dozens died after hospitals ran out of oxygen cylinders. Epidemiology experts attribute the accelerating pace of the epidemic to a new variant of the coronavirus and the lack of enforcement of social-distancing measures by national and local authorities.

The Brazilian Health Ministry, currently led by an active army general, Eduardo Pazzuelo, “consistently recommended drugs that have no scientific proof to work against the disease, corroborating the use of hydroxychloroquine, nitazoxanide, ivermectin, etc.,” said Dr. Barbosa. “No serious international organization recommends them.

“Instead, they have joined the anti-vaccine discussions, putting fear in the population. It is disastrous.... I don't want to say genocidal, but it's hard to find another word.”

Filipe Domingues reports from Brazil.
Twitter: @filipedomingues.

GOODNEWS: Catholic bishops tell L.G.B.T. youth, 'God created you, God loves you'



A group of 12 U.S. Catholic bishops, including a cardinal and an archbishop, have signed a statement of support for L.G.B.T. youth, telling them, “God created you, God loves you and God is on your side.”

“As we see in the Gospels, Jesus Christ taught love, mercy and welcome for all people, especially for those who felt persecuted or marginalized in any way; and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches that L.G.B.T. people are to be treated with ‘respect, compassion and sensitivity,’” reads the statement, released on Jan. 25 by the Tyler Clementi Foundation, an organization that fights L.G.B.T. bullying in schools, workplaces and faith communities.

Among those signing the statement were Cardinal Joseph Tobin, archbishop of Newark, and Archbishop John Wester, who leads the Archdiocese of Santa Fe. Other signatories included Bishops Robert McElroy, who heads the Diocese of San Diego, Steven Biegler of Cheyenne and Edward Weisenburger of Tucson. (James Martin, S.J., an editor-at-large at **America**, assisted the Tyler Clementi Foundation in contacting bishops who might be interested in signing the statement.)

“All people of goodwill should help, support, and defend L.G.B.T. youth; who attempt suicide at much higher rates

than their straight counterparts; who are often homeless because of families who reject them; who are rejected, bullied and harassed; and who are the target of violent acts at alarming rates,” the statement continues.

Archbishop Wester said in a phone interview with **America** that he signed the statement because he wanted L.G.B.T. young people to know “you have worth, you have value and you’re a child of God.” A former high school teacher, Archbishop Wester said bullying can be toxic for young people who are trying to come to terms with their sexual orientation, especially when either they or others misinterpret church teaching on homosexuality to convey the notion that being gay itself is sinful.

The church teaches that homosexuality is “objectively disordered” and condemns sexual acts between people of the same sex as sinful. But at the same time, it says that gay people “must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided.”

Archbishop Wester said young L.G.B.T. people may sometimes misinterpret church teaching about homosexuality and incorrectly think they are somehow cut off from God’s love as a result. “We have our teachings, which we prize and cherish,



CNS photo/Gregory A. Shemitz

Angelo Alcasabas prepares for the annual Pre-Pride Festive Mass at St. Francis of Assisi Church in New York on June 29, 2019.

but those teachings need to be understood in the proper context of love and mercy,” he said. “Sometimes people can make equivocations, ‘Well, if it’s a sin to engage in a homosexual act, then I must be terrible person.’ The church doesn’t teach that and it’s important [young people] don’t get that erroneous impression.”

Bishop John Stowe, who leads the Diocese of Lexington, Ky., said he signed the statement because he has heard from alumni and students in his diocese’s Catholic schools who said bullying of L.G.B.T. students can be a serious challenge.

“Sometimes offensive remarks were left unchallenged or even laughed at by faculty,” Bishop Stowe said in an email. “I have heard from other L.G.B.T. Catholics that what other students experienced as the best years of their lives were often traumatizing experiences for them as they experienced social rejection and concerns about God’s love for them and whether they had any hope of salvation. Too often these students have felt isolated, sometimes even afraid to get support from parents and family.”

Michael J. O’Loughlin, *national correspondent*.
Twitter: @MikeOLoughlin.



CNS photo/Philimon Bulawayo Reuters

The late Robert Mugabe reviews troops in February 2014.

Despite reburial efforts, Zimbabwe still has not reckoned with 1980s violence

For years, families of victims of mass killings and disappearances in Zimbabwe during the 1980s have tried to locate the remains of their loved ones for formal reburial. Described by some researchers as a genocide, the violence associated with the late Robert Mugabe’s Gukurahundi campaign continues to be a source of pain and discord in a country where state-sanctioned violence has long been an aspect of political power plays.

Now, as a post-Mugabe government attempts to conduct the exhumation and reburial of victims of that violence, family members and human rights critics charge that it is moving too quickly, preventing an accounting of the Gukurahundi (an expression from the Shona language for “the early rain that washes away the chaff”).

While President Emmerson Mnangagwa has held consultative meetings with civic groups and traditional chiefs, critics say his administration has not shown a commitment to fully address and account for the Gukurahundi. Recent efforts by Mr. Mnangagwa’s government to rebury remains have been criticized by families and activists who say they have not been consulted and perceive the effort as a ploy to silence families.

A truth and reconciliation commission like the one used in South Africa to heal the wounds of apartheid “has been needed for a long time,” said Oskar Wermter, a Jesuit priest who has lived and worked in Zimbabwe for more than 50 years. The government has been reluctant to convene such a commission. At the time of the killings, Mr. Mnangagwa was a state security minister in charge of security forces later implicated in the violence.

Those in power “are afraid of the truth coming out,” Father Wermter said. “The declarations of intent, of wanting to go back to Gukurahundi, are not honest. They will never do it. Not this generation, who were responsible.”

Marko Phiri contributes from Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

INSIDE AMERICA

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

With the inauguration of President Joseph R. Biden, the second Catholic president in the history of the nation, **America** continues to bring in-depth news and analysis on the issues that matter in the church and the world. In addition, as we begin the season of Lent, we offer spiritual reflections and resources to prepare you for the celebration of Easter.

EDITORS' PICK

“The Moral Economy”

A new series

from John W. Miller

“The Moral Economy” explores how people, businesses and governments are adapting to a changing world, and how those changes can be seen through the prism of Catholic social teaching.

John W. Miller, a longtime reporter for The Wall Street Journal, will look at various parts of society in crisis, from nursing homes and unions to journalism and the environment. Markets and the economy are where we all interact, so it makes sense to report on these changes with deeply reported business and economic stories. To follow the money—with an eye on the heart.

The first installment, published in January, was a report on a groundbreaking effort by Pope Francis to minister to corporate C.E.O.s. The pope has waded into an ongoing conversation about reforming capitalism, but it is unclear how much of an impact he is actually having. “They think they are lobbying us, and we



think we are evangelizing them,” one Vatican official said.

That quote highlights how hard it is to turn idealism into practice, and the tension between the things of God and the things of Caesar—the strivings of the human heart and the limits of the physical world. But that is a tension worth exploring. “In journalism, as in religion, when we benchmark our assertions and beliefs against the reality of people’s lives, we get closer to the truth,” Mr. Miller says.

Visit americamagazine.org/moral-economy to read the first installment: “Inside Pope Francis’ mission to make capitalism work for the common good.”

LENT GUIDE 2021

America has created a dedicated section on our website featuring essays, reflections, podcasts and videos. This page will be updated throughout Lent and Holy Week. Visit americamagazine.org/lent2021.

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KERRY WEBER, EXECUTIVE EDITOR

You probably recognize the name Kerry Weber. Kerry has been with **America** since 2009 and currently is an executive editor cultivating and editing feature stories and faith essays. You may also recognize her voice on our highly popular podcast “The Word.” Kerry is also the author of the award-winning book *Mercy in the City: How to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, visit the imprisoned, and keep your day job*, which describes her efforts to more fully live out the Works of Mercy during Lent. She attended Providence College, Oxford University and Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism, and lives in Massachusetts with her husband and three children.

PRODUCT HIGHLIGHT

“Learning to Pray: A Guide for Everyone”

by James Martin, S.J.

Learning to Pray is written for everyone from the doubtful skeptic to the devout believer. This new book will introduce you to a variety of methods of prayer in an accessible way. It talks about what people are most confused about when they start to pray: What’s supposed to happen when I pray? In other words, what happens when I close my eyes? Father Martin also talks about various challenges in prayer, like distractions and dryness.

All proceeds from the sale of the book benefit America Media.



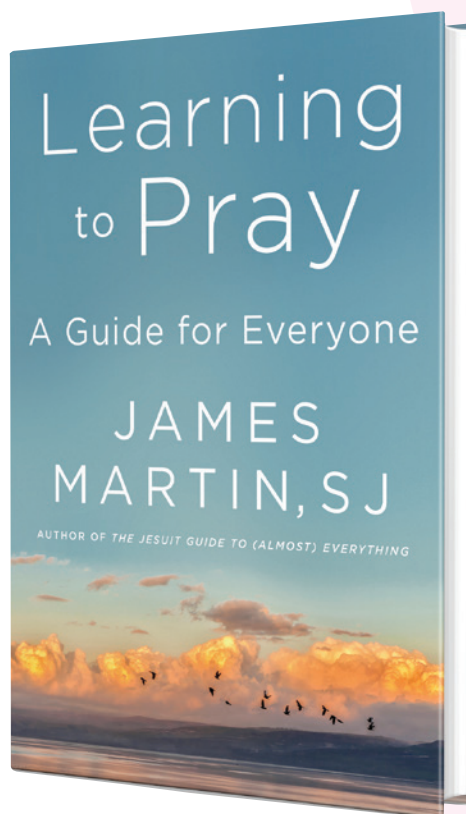
“Learning to Pray”

Six-Part Video Series on YouTube

In this six-part series, Father Martin shares excerpts from his new book and explains why prayer is for everyone.

Topics include:

- ▶ Why you should pray
- ▶ What is prayer?
- ▶ What happens when you pray?
- ▶ Overcoming distractions in prayer
- ▶ What is spiritual direction?
- ▶ How to pray, kinds of prayer:
- ▶ Ignatian contemplation, Lectio Divina, Examen



Father Martin’s new book, *Learning to Pray: A Guide for Everyone* is available now from **HarperOne: harperone.com/jamesmartin**



WHAT WE'VE LEARNED



Hard lessons from the first year of the Covid-19 pandemic

The shutdowns in the United States—of businesses, restaurants, schools, churches—began one year ago this month. What at first seemed a temporary stopgap to stem the spread of Covid-19 has become part of a multi-faceted, months-long battle with a virus that, at press time, has infected more than 27 million people in the United States alone and has claimed the lives of more than 463,000 Americans.

The pandemic already has changed our lives in countless ways, and Pope Francis said that the pandemic “has given us a chance to develop new ways of living.” But in order to do so, we must look back at what we have already learned. With this in mind, we asked 14 experts to reflect on the biggest lessons from the past year in the hope that they might help us find a better way forward.

Catholic Colleges and Universities

It's the message, not the messenger



There was no playbook for handling the Covid-19 crisis, and for a while we knew only that the virus was very hard to prevent, treat or predict. The first New York City case was reported on March 1, 2020. Fordham University made the decision to send our students home on March 9 and to resume instruction remotely three days later. We initially thought that the crisis would pass by the end of spring break. As we know, that did not turn out to be the case. For the ensuing nine months, and continuing today, all decisions are provisional.

It was a climate that played to the strength of Jesuit education: an intellectual and organizational agility that has allowed us to pivot to new strategies and technologies as we spread across the globe and as circumstances changed around us. Our mission, now almost five centuries old, is as challenging as it has ever been—and I include in that estimation the suppression of the Society of Jesus in the late 1700s and early 1800s. It is hard to overstate how rapidly and unpredictably the world is changing, and with it, the way a Jesuit education is delivered.

The lesson we take from the pandemic is one we have always taught ourselves: We must continue to deliver a timeless education using whatever new tools come to hand. If culture and technology change at blazing speeds, the human heart does not. Our souls still yearn for truth; our intellects for learning. We continue our mission as long as we feed that hunger with rigor and integrity.



Joseph M. McShane, S.J., is president of Fordham University in New York.

TEMPORARILY
CLOSED
COVID-19



Developing Nations

We cannot end this pandemic anywhere if we do not end it everywhere

A few months into the Covid-19 pandemic in Cameroon, Marie began to worry. As an H.I.V.-positive woman, Marie depends on regular testing and medications to control her illness. She wondered if, as a pregnant mother, she could access such services during the pandemic. Marie was right to worry.

The coronavirus's rapid and unpredictable spread has disrupted global health systems. It has also threatened to reverse decades of progress we have made on fighting illnesses like H.I.V. and malaria. According to a recent World Health Organization study, 14 African countries have seen a decline of more than 50 percent in critical health services. Children have missed out on vaccinations. Mothers have missed their pre- and postnatal care. And there has been a sharp decline in families' access to healthy and nutritious food.

The good news is that, against all odds, our church and community partners have maintained their local health systems. Meanwhile, aid organizations like Catholic Relief Services have adapted to the Covid-19 context. In some cases, we are conducting our programs online. In others, we are modifying our activities to adhere to new health and safety protocols. For women like Marie, such adaptations are the difference between life and death. These adaptations are also vital to long-term control of diseases like malaria and tuberculosis.

While we are encouraged by the efficacy of the approved Covid-19 vaccines, our global leaders need to make sure equity is at the center of the vaccine distribution process. We must also push for more U.S. funding to address the virus's impacts overseas.

In his latest encyclical, "Fratelli Tutti," Pope Francis touched on the theme of global interconnectedness, stating, "We need to develop the awareness that nowadays we are either all saved together or no one is saved." To put it another way, we cannot end this pandemic anywhere if we do not end it everywhere.



Sean Callahan is president and chief executive officer of Catholic Relief Services. A 31-year agency veteran, he has also served as vice president of Caritas Internationalis and president of Caritas North America.



Mental Health

We have suffered trauma. We may do so again. But we will endure.

Adversity is a harsh teacher, but its lessons are hard to forget; and first among them is just how vulnerable and dependent each of us is. The isolation enforced by the pandemic, and the uncertainty and anxiety that trail in its wake, are stressful for all and, for some, traumatic. Deprived of the solace and support of family and friends and the reassuring routines of ordinary life, we can find ourselves irritable, moody and listless and, not uncommonly, depressed and tempted in baneful ways.

Yet a second and corollary lesson is also true: We human beings are remarkably resilient. The well-hailed heroes on the front lines and the less conspicuous but no less heroic caregivers in nursing homes or by a relative's bedside are to be admired, in part, because they are otherwise ordinary. Afflicted like any of us, concerned about their families and making ends meet, and often shouldering additional burdens attending their race or gender, they have risen to the occasion, done what needed to be done and saved lives.

A third lesson is less obvious but no less important. The enormity and gravity of the pandemic, as well as its public nature, can dull us to traumas equally grave but altogether more personal and private. Enfolded in our shared experience is a legacy of personal adversity suffered long before Covid-19, one that rarely finds public acknowledgement but is rich in hope and possibility for the present.

We have confronted fearful threats before, sustained injury and heartache before, grieved earlier losses. Doing so was hard—perhaps harder than at present—and often lonely. But we survived. Better still, we learned to go on living; humbled but also grateful, hopefully more compassionate and a bit wiser. We can do so again. Remember: We know how to do this. Pray God, we do.



Joseph J. Guido, O.P., is the senior staff psychologist in the personal counseling center and an assistant professor of psychology at Providence College in Providence, R.I.





The American Family

We must care for those who once cared for us

By now we are well aware that the single biggest risk factor for a severe or fatal Covid-19 outcome is age. But we are still coming to grips with the fact of enormous increased incidence of severe or fatal Covid-19 among adults in long-term care as compared with those living at home. A study in November comparing population-specific mortality ratios and rates for long-term care residents and community-dwelling adults over 65 across 12 member countries of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development found on average a 24-fold increase in the death rate among long-term care residents, with country-specific numbers ranging from 14 fold (Germany) to 74 fold (Canada). American adults age 65 and older are 23 times more likely to die from Covid-19 if they live in a long-term care facility instead of at home with family.

What we should learn from this is that the very best place for our elderly to live—now and always—is where they are loved. This is just as true for children, people with disabilities and all who are sick or suffering. Ultimately, we know this is true for all of us. The American family can still be the safe house that our faith tells us it should be.

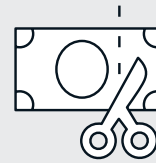
This is good news and a big challenge. Good news, because we have a powerful program to fight this epidemic and the next crisis down the road. We can begin today to bring our elderly home again. There are about 1.5 million adults in nursing homes and an additional million in assisted living communities. Many of these cases require sophisticated medical care that cannot be handled at home. But a large number of older adults with special needs can be accommodated at home with greater reliance on visiting nurses, family education, medical equipment and open hearts.

Such a change also requires that we reorient our society to value and make room for care work in concrete ways. Practically, we should pursue lively conversations about flexible work arrangements, family leave and tax credits for caregivers, regardless of the age of their dependents. And even beyond these types of vital assistance, we can bring caregivers a meal, offer to relieve them for a day and practice the virtues of encouragement and prayer.

When the reckoning of this year gets fully underway, I hope we will include a reassessment of our willingness to separate the elderly from our homes and from our lives. I am persuaded that we will all be better off—young and old alike—if we can willingly adopt lifestyles that involve the daily, bodily care of those who once bodily cared for us.



Catherine Ruth Pakaluk is associate professor of social research and economic thought at The Catholic University of America. She lives in Hyattsville, Md., with her husband, eight children and her 86-year-old mother-in-law.



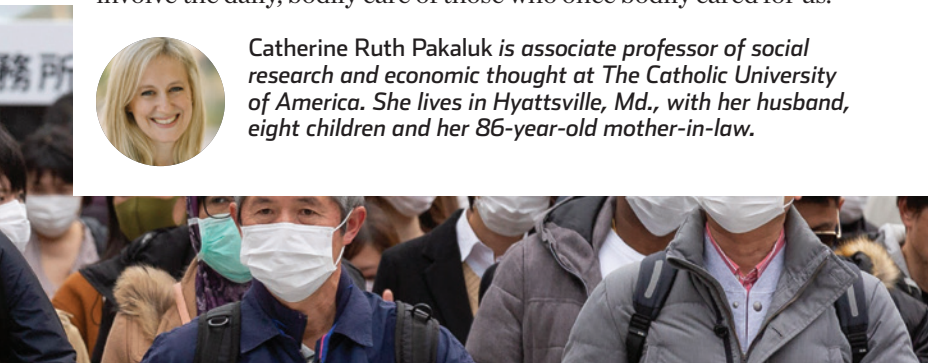
Inequality

Our nation has an empathy gap

What strikes me most about the pandemic we are currently living through is this: In the United States, where we claim that “all men are created equal” and purportedly strive to reach that ideal, we value, above all else, inequality. We cherish the idea that some are worse off than us because it allows us to feel “grateful” or better or somehow appeased.

This may sound harsh. It is! It is a difficult lesson. And to be clear, this claim does not mean that the average reader starts her day actively cheering for others to have worse luck, to have less opportunity. No, this pandemic has shed harsh light on our nation’s empathy gap: our inability to move beyond individualism in our notions of freedom, of health, of prosperity. We dutifully cheer for the “heroes” and the “frontline workers” without advocating for better pay, sick leave or policies that would improve the lives of teachers, delivery workers, restaurant cooks, home health aides. We organize neighborhood displays for delivery workers and keep hitting “add to cart” for whatever we need. We “love” our teachers but demand that they return to in-person work without regard for the safety of their families. We cheer at 7 p.m. (or we did for a while) for the doctors and the nurses, but we cannot be relied upon to wear masks, stay home or not travel for the holidays because our families, our needs, our memories, our freedom is paramount.

Our commitment to inequality has tragic consequences beyond moral injury. By contenting ourselves with the theater of appreciation, we blind ourselves to how our toxic individualism exacerbates a pandemic that kills the most vulnerable among us. Neither should we overlook that the pandemic is also intensifying the unequal-

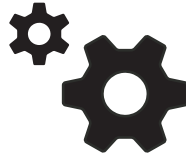




ity we hold so dear: Non-whites are dying at higher rates, low-income frontline workers are more likely to get sick and not have access to health care, women are more likely to bear the burdens of care work that has now obliterated any approximation of equal pay and equal opportunity in the workforce. We know that these injustices are intersectional, and they compound to profoundly alter the lives of the most vulnerable. Now we must ask ourselves: As we celebrate the incarnation of God-for-us, will we embody the solidarity God has extended to humanity? Or are we too busy making memories?



Natalia Imperatori-Lee is professor of religious studies at Manhattan College in the Bronx, N.Y., where she also coordinates the Catholic Studies program. She is the author of *Cuéntame: Narrative in the Ecclesial Present* (Orbis Books).



Technology

Online Mass has connected us to a wider church, but it will not replace our local parish

I am going to miss online church. It is easier to get the kids there on a Sunday morning, for one thing. And it offers a taste of what Catholics are not really supposed to have: a marketplace of churches, of music, of ideas, of personalities. We are supposed to have our local parish, love it or not.

For most of the pandemic, my family in Colorado has been tuning in to the video feed at Saint Sabina, a storied parish on the South Side of Chicago. The dance and choir and homily nearly always bring me to tears at some point in the course of making breakfast. We have kept up a bit with our local parish's ministries, but now Sunday morning gives us a chance to get out of quarantine, to leave our overwhelmingly white town for a culturally Black parish, to expand the wideness of our prayers.

Yet whenever we pass our neighborhood church on walks, I know that this cannot last, that we must return. Ours is not a religion of infinite, charisma-following choices. It is not a religion of virality and influencers, but of locality and mutuality. The physicality of the sacraments insists on this. You have to be there. Grace can flow through video streams, but they are no substitute for presence.

For all the good we have gotten from our sojourn with Saint Sabina, this will not be our "new normal" after the vaccine. Our responsibility and our sacraments lie here at home, where we can be present, where we can co-organize, where we do not just watch but give.



Nathan Schneider, a contributing writer for *America*, is a reporter and professor of media studies at the University of Colorado Boulder.

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Catholic Schools

Catholic schools can pivot in order to benefit the person

We learned that Catholic schools can be creative and agile in pursuing new ways of doing things in order to support the education of our students. We learned that Catholic educators can pivot and change our methods, retaining the foundation of our work and providing students with multiple encounters with Jesus during the school day, even when using virtual platforms.

During the pandemic, Catholic schools have successfully offered both virtual and in-person instruction, providing children with not only an optimal learning environment that meets their academic needs, but an atmosphere that is supportive of their social and emotional health. In this manner, Catholic schools have served the common good and afforded students with opportunities to develop their minds, bodies and spirits. Research has shown that children, especially the most vulnerable students, may suffer when they are not receiving in-person instruction. Catholic schools have met their responsibility to provide high-quality education in a physically safe environment, in places that support the mental health of students, when they opened for in-person instruction.

Catholic schools have placed students first in the teaching and learning processes. We have continued to orient these endeavors toward the pursuit of beauty, truth and goodness in the person of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit is at work, breathing life and fostering renewal in the souls of the young people entrusted to our care. It is through this unique and blessed devotion and service to God's people that generations will be transformed.



Kathy Mears is the interim president and chief executive officer of the National Catholic Educational Association.



The American Work Force

Human dignity does not depend on having a job

One of the deepest convictions of American society is that if you have a job, you have dignity. And if you do not work for pay, you do not count. Americans make grudging and inconsistent exceptions to this rule for children, stay-at-home parents, people with disabilities and elders. But they also shout "Get a job!" at people exercising their First Amendment right to protest. We hear: Your voice only matters if you work for pay. Moreover, if you make a lot of money, then you matter more. You are important, indispensable.

The pandemic taught us that this entire narrative is false. One year ago, 20 million Americans lost their jobs, virtually overnight. These people had just as much dignity after the lockdowns began as they had before. Their metaphysical and moral status had not changed. Our federal government seemed to recognize this, issuing weekly \$600 unemployment supplements, the largest direct payment to citizens in memory. Then that program expired, leaving millions who were still out of work unable to pay their bills.

Meanwhile, the people doing the most necessary labor—in hospitals and nursing homes, warehouses and grocery stores—are some of the lowest-paid. Their courage, and the injustice of their wages, could not be clearer. Don't they deserve a significant pay bump? This is also a question of racial justice, as those front-line workers are disproportionately Black and Hispanic. Many are undocumented immigrants, ineligible for unemployment benefits.

The unconditional dignity of every human being is a pillar of Catholic social teaching. So is the right to labor conditions that honor that dignity, including a living wage. The pandemic proved that we can no longer make an American exception to these truths.



Jonathan Malesic is a writer in Dallas. His book on burnout will be published by University of California Press this fall.

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Parish Life

We need ritual. All of us.

After the breathtaking human toll of Covid-19, one of the pandemic's greatest casualties has been ritual. The pandemic has disrupted our ability to attend Mass and receive the Eucharist. Weddings have been scaled back, baptisms and first Communion delayed. Chaplains robed in sterile suits administer last sacraments to the dying while loved ones join in through the antiseptic glow of a screen. Rather than deeply embodied spaces of communal mourning, funerals and burial rites now feel almost provisional. This is to say nothing of the other rituals we've missed: graduations, birthday parties, school picture days, work commutes. From rites of passage to the little practices that order our days, the pandemic has corroded our sense of time and meaning.

Ritual is an act of survival. In moments of grief and uncertainty, we return to ritual because it offers us a way of enfolded our suffering into the life and memory of our community. In such moments, ritual's formulaic nature becomes its greatest asset: It is effective precisely because we do not need to invent it ourselves. We know what to do, what to say, where to stand, how to be. Rituals are the language of community. To be deprived of ritual during a moment of pain is to be deprived, in a real way, of solidarity and hope we need to envision the future.

The pandemic has wrought disproportionate havoc on communities of color and on the elderly, poor and medically vulnerable. As parishes labor to re-envision liturgical participation, they must work determinedly to ensure that adaptations do not reinscribe this same racism, ageism, classism and ableism. From parking lot liturgy to drive-through confession, parishes have learned that inclusivity in ritual requires fearless creativity—a virtue that, I pray, continues to shape parish life long after Covid-19 becomes a distant memory.



Susan Bigelow Reynolds is assistant professor of Catholic studies at Candler School of Theology at Emory University.



The Health of Children

The pandemic has unmasked some health needs and exacerbated others

The Covid-19 pandemic has unmasked the unmet health needs of children and families across the globe. Pandemics produce risks due to infection, confinement, social isolation, stress and delayed care for all patients from overburdened health systems. Clearly, affordable, accessible and equitable health care is essential for treating acute illness.

There is a tragically increased risk of infection and death for those living in poverty, homeless families, those in refugee and detention camps, Indigenous families and persons of color.

Quarantine has also increased the physical, emotional and sexual abuse of children. Their growth and development will be affected by school shutdown, reduced socialization and physical activity, changes to routine, especially sleep, excessive protection and dietary changes forced by food insecurity. Such toxic childhood experiences impair learning adaptive behaviors, lifelong physical and mental health and adult work productivity. Parents with vastly different personal, professional and technological supports must ensure protection and normal development.

Parents themselves have manifested increased acute stress, anxiety, depression and suicide. During pregnancy these contribute to fetal loss and impairments in infant neurodevelopment. There has been a surge in domestic violence toward women confined with abusive partners and lacking usual support. Men have had a higher death rate than women correlated to increased smoking, drinking and drug use; resistance to hand-washing and mask wearing; and delayed recourse to health care.

These experiences raise serious challenges to care and justice for the future including the need to: 1) resuscitate public health and its role in disease prevention and the eradication of poverty, 2) ensure equitable access to treatment and vaccination, 3) address the global crisis of insufficient mental health services.



Nuala Patricia Kenny, a member of the Sisters of Charity of Halifax, received her M.D. from Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, and has had a distinguished career in pediatric medicine. Her ongoing research focuses on end of life care, the underlying risk factors for sexual abuse by members of the clergy and just health care policy.



The Economy

We need to see the economy in human terms

The most important lesson about the economy that we should learn from the pandemic is that we need to see the economy in human terms, rather than in terms of dollars and cents. Too often we have framed our response to the pandemic in terms of a trade-off between the “economy (i.e., money) and human lives. This has led to a series of choices, both collectively and individually, that will have a terrible impact on human well-being down the road. Shutting down the economy is not a problem because it might hurt the stock market. It is a problem because it led to widespread unemployment, creating hardship for millions of actual people. It destroyed thousands of small businesses, along with the dreams of their owners. Around the world, it has plunged tens of millions of people back into the deep poverty that shortens lives and curtails human aspiration. The impact from a lost year of education will be felt in the lives of millions of young Americans, particularly the underprivileged.

The pandemic has revealed the profound chasm between the classes. The rich and comfortable shut themselves in and lived off the labor of others on the front lines in order to spare themselves the risk of disease. Their incomes were steady, and they benefited from a rising stock market. They were able to justify a series of policies that battered those at the bottom by dismissing concerns about the welfare of the suffering as being “just about money.”

Too many of us are self-deceived about our love of our neighbors and too ready to prioritize our own fears over concern for the common good. We have been blind to the way our response to the pandemic has harmed the community as a whole and diminished the life prospects of those we should care most about. We need to reclaim the ability to think about the common good in terms of the fullness of human life rather than in terms of what is easily measured (whether lives lost to Covid-19 or changes in G.D.P.), and we urgently need to think harder about the impact our choices have on those on the margins.



Mary Hirschfeld is associate professor of economics and theology at Villanova University.



Catholic Hospitals

We must remain committed to serve the vulnerable

The mission of CommonSpirit Health is to make the healing presence of God known in our world by improving the health of the people we serve, especially those who are vulnerable, while we advance social justice for all.

As the largest Catholic health system in the United States, we have seen firsthand the ways in which the pandemic has shined a spotlight on critical issues, including lack of access to basic primary care services and ongoing inequities in health. It has also driven important health care innovations like virtual care and telehealth services. We have also learned the real power of our mission. We know that if we continue to lead with our mission, we are heading in the right direction.

Over this past year our mission has been exemplified in the decisions we’ve made and through the dedicated work of our clinicians, nurses and staff. In fact, in a recent survey our employees and providers said the number one reason why they will get the Covid-19 vaccine is “in order to protect others.” We have enhanced our virtual at-home care for Covid-19 patients, which includes frequent check-ins. We have also set up discharge care that provides oxygen and other services to patients at home.

There is much more work to do. Our role to serve and advocate for our communities is more important than ever. Our commitment to serving the common good will continue to guide us during the pandemic, across health care delivery, and across our work in health equity as we collectively work toward a better future.



Tom McGinn, M.D., is executive vice president of Physician Enterprise, CommonSpirit Health and a board member of America Media.



Globalization

How does digital access cross the last mile?

The Jesuit Refugee Service has a simple motto: accompany, serve, advocate. Before the Covid-19 pandemic, JRS had a single method for how to do this: in person. Walking with forcibly displaced people was done side by side. Anything important required physical presence.

For the first month of the lockdown, we were in organizational shock, trying to figure out how to stay true to who we are in a new normal. Then creativity and imagination stepped forward.

Zoom replaced travel. Radio and WhatsApp transported teachers' voices. Monthly Microsoft Teams meetings superseded endless email loops. We got so good at these things that travel, teaching and communication will never go back to exactly the way they were. Through online Masses and digital faith sharing, we are keeping our spiritual foundation alive, as well.

Pope Francis always reminds us that we are in one boat together. Covid-19 has taught us that we are together in the digital boat as well. While digital is not a full substitute for human contact, it accompanies better than we thought. With that in mind, the key lesson about globalization is the old challenge: How does digital access cross the last mile?

How do our forcibly displaced sisters and brothers fully participate in a digital world? It is not only online learning or counseling; it is also online employment in the global economy that will help transform marginalized refugees into participants in their new communities and in their own destinies. Without digital access, we are not in the boat together.

Accompaniment is more than walking with people. In the words of Joe Hampson, S.J., a longtime JRS team member, it also includes capacity building, empowerment and effective support. The digital world can help us do this.



Thomas H. Smolich, S.J., is the international director of Jesuit Refugee Service.



Spiritual Well-being

We must intentionally live and act in hope in order to move into the unknown

In this, our time of plague, we have come to realize that we human beings, although flawed, are more beautiful than we ever could have imagined, that through Love's extravagance we are graced with a share in the divine image. We recognize that we are fragile and vulnerable, yet strong and resilient; that we are capable of great compassion and generosity, yet also capable of terrifying cruelty and meanness.

We have begun to grasp our ineluctable interconnectedness: We wear masks to protect those whom we love and strangers who are not really strangers at all. We distance ourselves to protect those battered by social inequities. We pray for nurses, physicians, technicians, specialists, medical researchers and scientists; for those who cook and clean and keep buildings in good condition; for those who collect refuse; for those who stock shelves and staff cash registers; for those who deliver packages and mail and food. We are one and, therefore, responsible for and to one another.

In this, our time of plague, we have come to know the shape and texture of mourning. We have become acquainted with suffering and anguish, lament and loss. We have become too intimate with death. Yet we are learning to launch ourselves onto the sea of hope, to steady ourselves and stretch beyond our capacities—no matter how small and limited. We follow hope into the streets to protest injustice, to stand with those excluded and minoritized and marginalized, to risk new solitudes and solidarities. We follow hope's challenge to re-member, to recollect, to reconsider; to value paradoxes of absence and presence, of daring and possibility.

In this, our time of plague, we must intentionally live and act in hope in order to move into the unknown future that God's love prepares for all creation.



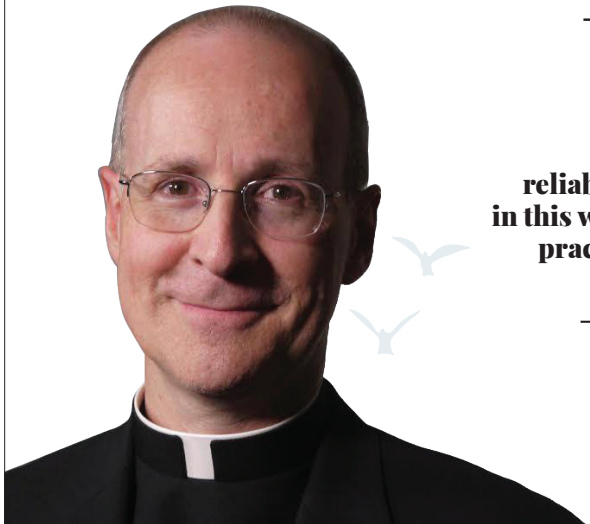
M. Shawn Copeland is a professor emerita of theology at Boston College.



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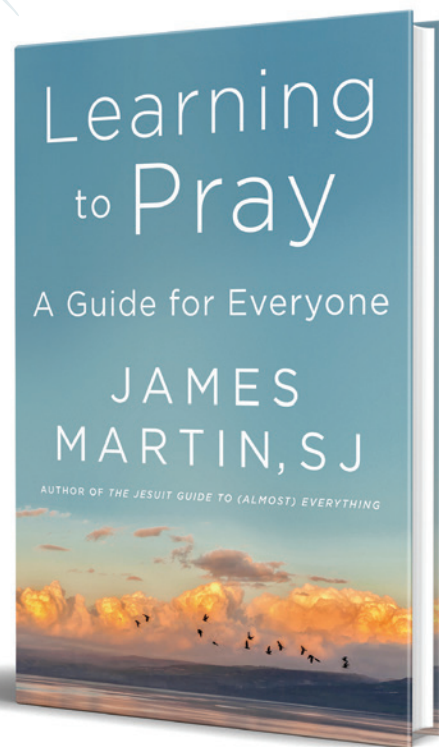
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encounters, Hoover confronts, denies, and reclaims
theology, philosophy, art, and personal stories to
grapple with the eternal, vexing question of the
presence of God in human suffering.

Joe Hoover, SJ, is a Jesuit brother working as
a playwright and actor, as well as poetry editor
at America Media. He is from Omaha, attended
Marquette University, and lives in a Jesuit
community in Brooklyn.

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DAYS OF REVOLUTION

10 years after Occupy and the Arab Spring, what have we learned?

By Nathan Schneider

Allow me to tell you a story about stories—about how stories can change the world and how they can get in the way. It centers on a story first told a decade ago, in early 2011. This is a story about revolution and war, triumph and catastrophe, and it is also about what we have been up to over the past 10 years with our time and attention, our hope and our heartbreak.

This very big story was set in motion on Dec. 17, 2010, when a 26-year-old Tunisian street vendor named Mohamed Bouazizi set himself on fire, fed up with police and bureaucratic harassment as he tried to make a living. His experience was particular but not unique, and it moved others to action. While he lay in


the hospital dying, protests spread from his hometown of Sidi Bouzid to the capital of Tunis, and they would not go away. Day after day, people flooded the streets and shut down the country, demanding the fall of the regime of President Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali, who had ruled the country since 1987. On a visit there years earlier, I saw his photograph looking down from the walls of every tiny shop and from the billboards above them. On Jan. 14, 2011, the president and his family fled the country. His omnipresent rule ended.

Just over a week later, on Jan. 25, a cry rang out in Egypt. It was National Police Day, and political opposition groups planned a protest in Cairo, as they had



iStock/Joel Carillet

Two girls are part of the crowd in Cairo's Tahrir Square on the day after the resignation of President Hosni Mubarak on Feb. 11, 2011. The word "Egypt" is painted in Arabic on their foreheads.



The story was simple and clear. A cry rings out, people take the squares, the regime falls.

done in years past on the legal holiday. But this time the cry spread, particularly on a Facebook page called “We Are All Khaled Said,” memorializing a man beaten to death by police outside an internet cafe the previous June—a man in his 20s, like Mr. Bouazizi. Thousands poured into Cairo’s central Tahrir Square, and they would not go away. They held mass meetings and set up kitchens for themselves and swept the square in ritual cleanings; they were shot at by police and assaulted by thugs on camels. Eighteen days later, on Feb. 11, the regime fell. Hosni Mubarak, after holding power since 1981, had resigned.

By then the story was out in the world. It was loose. Its arc went something like this: A cry rings out. People take the squares. The regime falls.

The story was simple and clear, and in the span of two months, it had worked twice. A cry rings out, people take

the squares, the regime falls. The promise of the story spread across the Arab world: to Jordan and Yemen and Sudan, Bahrain and Libya and Morocco. Then Syria.

Today, some of those countries remain the intransigent monarchies that they were then, perhaps with a few constitutional tweaks. Some of those names cannot be said without a wince because they have been infernos of death and are still smoldering. But in early 2011, they were places of popular awakening, of an “Arab Spring,” of chants and banners and marches and promise. The people demand the fall of the regime! *Ash-shab yurid isqat an-nizam!*

But it was not only the Arabs who took action that year. In the United States, starting on Feb. 14, protesters occupied the Wisconsin state capitol building in Madison, opposing an anti-union bill that Gov. Scott Walker was poised to sign. The mobilization went far beyond the scripted



Nathan Schneider

Occupy Wall Street protesters in New York City on Oct. 1, 2011.

wherever it went. There were guerrilla libraries of books and tracts, “Anonymous” masks and music. The protesters said they had no leaders; when the media or police tried to identify some, those people, too, would claim they represented nobody but themselves. Decisions happened in open assemblies or in small groups of friends. Protesters would not identify their movements with any political party or faction; they were at once individuals and an undifferentiated mass. They shared no single ideology. It was as if all such organizational forms were from a world now passing away.

Why 2011?

What was happening? Why was this fire spreading around the world? There were several popular explanations at the time.

One was social media. Protesters from Cairo to Athens had Facebook logos on their signs. Particularly under repressive regimes, social media was fresh air. Messages that could never pass through state-controlled broadcasters now spread from person to person, country to country. Silicon Valley executives reveled in their new role as liberators.

Yet so much of the strength of these uprisings was in physical presence and tenacity—enduring the assaults-by-camel, sleeping under the sky and cleaning up afterward, provoking workplace strikes. The protesters were not mere clicktivists. Besides, revolutionary fevers had spread long before the internet. Think of 1989, 1968, 1848 and 1789.

Another theory was that economic conditions had reached a breaking point. Food prices in Egypt were peaking, for instance. But that was only a local explanation. In many places, the 2008 recession had already bottomed out, and things were slowly beginning to look up. Austerity did not feel in Spain the same as it did in Greece. In each place, the protests had their own mix of circumstances, and yet the protests were so much in unison.

Both those explanations, anyway, stink of determinism—of outside, mechanistic forces compelling human beings to act. To whom do our stories grant agency? To Silicon Valley? To the gross domestic product?

The chants spread around the world that year told a different tale: We! The people! Have found our voice! By this account, the agency was with the protesters. They had found a common method for making themselves heard,

rallies that unions can usually muster. State government workers and their allies interrupted the business of government, and Egyptians called in pizza orders for the protesters in Madison. Gov. Walker was no decades-long dictator; the protesters’ demands were not the same, but the story that activated them was.

Then in Greece, starting on May 5, long-simmering protests over economic hardship exploded into riots, occupations and strikes. In Spain, a one-day protest in Madrid planned for May 15 became a weeks-long occupation. There, again, the regime was not a particular autocrat so much as the economic hardship and government budget cuts following the 2008 global financial crisis, which had begun with the bursting of the U.S. housing market. But still a cry rang out, and people took the squares.

There were certain aspects that attached to the story

So much of the strength of these uprisings was in physical presence and tenacity. The protesters were not mere clicktivists.

and they were putting it to use. Their discovery traveled everywhere people felt they needed it.

There is a word for bite-sized bits of culture that spread on the internet: “meme.” It comes from Richard Dawkins’s 1976 book *The Selfish Gene*, which argues that the real action in evolutionary biology lies in the competition of genes—and, in culture, the competition of memes. Each of us, all we know and love, are just dust stirred up from the combat among the genetic material in us and the memes cycling through our networks.

Is the story of 2011 a meme? I cannot let myself call it that. I say “story” because stories seem to retain some space for the assent of people, who must not only share but also retell and adapt and inhabit them.

Ten years later, the best explanation I can find for the dangerous magic that happened in 2011 is also the simplest, and maybe the least satisfying: the story itself, told and retold by the people who tried to live it out. The story put long-impossible sorts of change suddenly within reach, with an expanded definition of politics that dwarfed the limits that politicians impose. It was a sort of faith. It enabled people to find one another, to encounter one another, to scheme and fight and win together. And as the year went on, the story kept spreading.

‘Occupy Wall Street. Bring Tent.’

The spirit of 2011 would find its next expression in the United States. The financial meltdown had been three years earlier, spraying its concoction of eviction, foreclosure and job loss across the country. There had been a right-wing “Tea Party” movement, most noticeable among older Americans; but the generation hit hardest—the young people entering the economy during a downturn—had so far been quiet. Too quiet? In fact, they had been hearing the story, and some of them were quietly preparing.

On Aug. 13 that year, I attended a meeting under the Hare Krishna Tree in Manhattan’s Tompkins Square Park.

A few dozen people were gathered in an approximate circle; the anarchist anthropologist David Graeber, who died this past September, was facilitating the meeting. They were

meeting in response to a cry that had rung out during the summer from the activist magazine *Adbusters*: “#OCCUPYWALLSTREET. SEPTEMBER 17. BRING TENT.” Echoing the uprisings that year in Egypt and Spain, the magazine posted on Twitter, “America needs its own Tahrir acampada.” The group in the park included people who had been at the camps in Egypt and Spain. There was the sister of a leading activist in Greece. They wanted to bring the United States into the story.

Occupy began on schedule that September. At first, the encampment, a couple of blocks from Wall Street, was small and little-noticed. But within a week or two, videos of attacks by police drew attention to it. More people came, then more, and soon there was an occupation in cities and towns across the country—with their hopeful libraries, kitchens and consensus-based assemblies, along with their own examples of problems endemic to American society, like untreated mental illness, racism and drug abuse. New encampments started all over the world under the #Occupy hashtag, in places the Arab Spring had never reached.

One evening that first week I paused in my reporting from the occupied plaza for a dinner with Jesuit friends. They had known movements before, both the effervescence and the jail cells. I said this was the closest thing I had experienced to the Book of Acts, with its stories of the earliest church. They did not look at me like I was crazy.

By mid-October, Occupy seemed everywhere. A lot of the core organizers I knew were artists; their performance had commandeered the headlines. Politicians and reporters kept demanding a set of demands, but the movement





An Occupy Wall Street protester in Zuccotti Park, New York, on Oct. 6, 2011.

A Black Lives Matter demonstration on Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, D.C., on Dec. 13, 2014.



issued only lists of grievances and general “principles of solidarity.” The occupations were day-and-night schools, full of talk and debate, art and media-making. Thousands of people were willing to put their lives on hold and their safety at risk to take part in this story. Among many, particularly those new to the business of protest, there was the apocalyptic conviction that the story’s third phase would come. The regime, whatever it was, would somehow fall. They really thought that. I was not sure they were wrong.

Instead, after nearly two months of occupation, a crackdown by police forces, coordinated through the Department of Homeland Security, cleared the camps. The night it happened in New York, in the early hours of Nov. 15, I watched from behind a barricade as officers beat my new friends to the ground and took them away in buses. As they reunited outside the jail the next day, many occupiers were already on the lookout for a new space, a new square to take. For a movement called Occupy, no other tactic was imaginable. They made several unsuccessful attempts, including on unutilized land owned by Trinity Wall Street, an Episcopal church. In the months afterward, on social media, activist after activist posted their break-up letters to the whole thing—some resentful, some bittersweet. The story didn’t account for what happens when the regime doesn’t fall.

As I was writing my book about that Occupy, another kind of Occupy appeared: a relief effort led by activists after Hurricane Sandy devastated the coastline of New York and New Jersey in 2012. They reconsecrated old churches with boxes of supplies for people who had lost everything. Else-

where, new organizing efforts around the issues of police violence, student debt and climate change emerged out of relationships formed in the camps—but usually they could not be called Occupy because they were not occupations of city squares. They employed different tactical repertoires. They departed from the story.

I kept wondering whether the subject I was writing about was really over. When do the stories of revolutions begin and end? The French Revolution might have begun in 1789, but then came Napoleon, and it wasn’t until 1870 that republicanism stuck. The early United States tried one constitution, tossed it and started again. These things take time. The movement philosopher Grace Lee Boggs used to ask her disciples, “What time is it on the clock of the world?” What time is it now on the clock of 2011?

Tunisia has elected a couple of presidents since President Ben Ali left—progress toward democracy, but how much depends on whom you ask. In Egypt, after a tumultuous year and a half, there was an election in mid-2012. Tech-savvy liberals had been the face of the Tahrir mobilization, but it was the longer, more patient organizing of the Muslim Brotherhood that won the government. A year later, protests returned, and President Mubarak’s military took back power in a coup. Order has prevailed over democracy, at least for now.

Spain and Greece saw new political parties born of the protests. They rose to national office and then fell when they proved powerless to oppose the dictates from bank offices abroad. In Wisconsin, Governor Walker’s bill passed, despite the occupation, and the state’s electorate defied the

Occupy Wall Street protesters in New York City on Oct. 1, 2011.

unions and voted for President Trump in 2016.

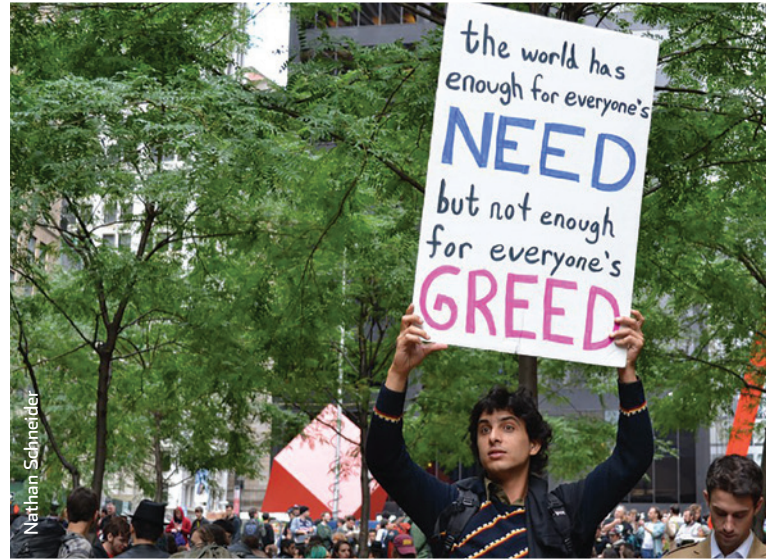
Then there are the nightmares. The story of 2011 offered no guidance for what happens when artillery and airstrikes rain down on street marches. Libya's protests turned into a civil war, a NATO-backed regime change and a failed state. The military crackdown on Syria's protests produced an especially grotesque war that was the breeding ground of the so-called Islamic State and a refugee crisis, washing the corpses of children up on Mediterranean shores and rejuvenating far-right nativism in Europe. Yemen still rages as a regional proxy war, with the help of American arms marked with the Saudi seal. After all the hope I and others felt as the story of 2011 swept across the world, the accounting of the decade since leans mightily toward disaster.

The Post-Social-Media Protest

Here in the United States, people would repeat like an incantation that Occupy had “changed the conversation”—about inequality or Wall Street or some such. True, its activists fed other efforts. People I met in Occupy encampments would go on to energize the Keystone XL blockades, Standing Rock and Black Lives Matter. An Occupier once whispered to me about a “Plan B”; this turned out to be the online mobilization around Bernie Sanders's presidential run in 2016. But Mr. Sanders did not win. Donald J. Trump became president. Mr. Trump's campaign strategist, Steve Bannon, had directed a documentary purporting to reveal Occupy's dark secrets, “Occupy Unmasked.” Surely part of what Mr. Trump meant by the phrase “American carnage” in his inaugural speech were the images of unshowered activists camping a few blocks from the Trump Building on Wall Street.

Could Occupy have somehow fed the ultimate rise of the New York business world's most colorful personification? In 1989, Mr. Trump faced protests after calling for the execution of the (wrongly) accused murderers of a jogger in Central Park. “I don't mind if they picket,” he told *The New York Times* in 2002, after he expressed skepticism about new evidence pointing toward their innocence. “I like pickets.” He, like the story of 2011 and the various one-off marches against his presidency, is a creature of attention, and these creatures feed on each other.

The University of North Carolina sociologist Zeynep Tufekci devotes her book *Twitter and Tear Gas* to parsing how attention flows through the post-social-media form of protest. She distinguishes the “signals” a movement broad-



casts about its power from the “capacity” it has to compel change. She identifies the “tactical freeze” that occurs when movements' ability to make decisions lags behind their talent for mobilizing masses—when a certain story goes viral and nobody is in a position to adjust it when conditions change. She also documents how authoritarian regimes have overcome their social-media ineptitude. Rather than merely censoring, as in times past, they have learned to flood the attention markets with noise.

Dr. Tufekci compares the recent network-powered uprisings to, for instance, the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. A march today might look very much like that one—busloads of people filling the streets of a capital—but the political meaning is different. Social media can convince people to show up in one place, but that does not mean the mobilization has capacity that any power-holder should be afraid of. A movement's success depends not just on what it can signal but what it can exact.

What did all the signals of 2011 have behind them, other than a story? There were many stories, really—so, so many—dwelling in every participant and every trajectory that led them there, in every lesson learned and every new possibility felt, in the experience of collectivity amid societies that hold together only by keeping people apart. These stories crossed languages and cultures. There were cries for the right to eat, the right to be housed, the right to a voice—as the Spanish put it, *democracia real ya!* Yet the differences meant that what united it all had to be thin enough to be portable. It had to be memorable and transmissible. Like a virus, it had to be small.

The story on its own could spread in ways that the many stories upon stories could not.

We see this pattern again. The Black Lives Matter movement has spread according to its own story. Roving



protests break out when videos of police murders of Black men surface online; the protesters, in anguish, demand specific justice. Many of the movement's leaders are women, and their manifestos exhibit a far-ranging analysis of systemic racism and the policies needed to confront it. More than the 2011 movements ever did, Black Lives Matter has developed an infrastructure of organizations able to shape and evolve its strategies. And yet the leaders seem to depend on a story-cycle they cannot control, a story with unique powers for mobilizing but that captures only a subset of the broader story they hope to tell.

I once heard the Princeton scholar of religion and African-American studies Eddie S. Glaude Jr. push back when someone said that most people understand only simple stories. He brought up the TV series "Game of Thrones"—nothing simple about that, yet at the time everyone was watching it. So it is, said Dr. Glaude, with President Trump. His message is anything but simple. Rather, he delivers season after season of twisty-turny intensity, with so many surprises and uncertainties that we cannot stop watching, whether we like him or not.

When you live among movements, when you dwell in them, you see the magnificent webs of stories that intersect there, that give the movements life and that so rarely reach the people watching them only on the news. What would it mean to have media capable of seeing and sharing all that? What would it mean to have stories that people can steer and redirect as conditions evolve? What capacities do

movements need to make their stories matter?

I hope for movements that can tell better stories than a president can—any president—stories more complex, irresistible and true than figureheads can muster. When you are immersed in a movement, you know this is possible. In his encyclical "Fratelli Tutti," Pope Francis observes that in many political systems "there seems to be no place for popular movements." He calls these movements "social poets." He insists that we must learn to hear them, while taking care not to mistake social media for solidarity, "social friendship" and "political love." That his terms sound strange attests to how far we are from manifesting them.

A decade ago, there was an outpouring of outrage and longing, of belonging and glimpses of victory. A certain story caught the winds of our networks and spread across the world, bearing promises as well as limits. Those limits meant that when the promises did not come true, the movements were not prepared to face the blowback from those with weapons and wealth and everything to lose. When the script ended, the movements were out of lines to speak. A world standing unprepared before as many cataclysms as ours does is due for some revolution. But the techniques that have made movements easier to conjure are making it harder for movements to win.

Nathan Schneider, a contributing writer for *America*, is a professor of media studies at the University of Colorado-Boulder.

This Lent, Forgive Your Neighbor

There is no turning toward God
without turning toward one another.

By Geoffrey Mackey

“Uh, Father? You forgot to give me a penance.” I was sitting in my pastor’s study, a much younger man than I am today, my cheeks tear-streaked and my shame revealed. I had not planned on confession that day. And it was not in the format I had grown to expect in the Byzantine Rite. Normally the penitent stands before an icon of Christ, with the priest to the side as a witness to the confession.

I had only asked for a meeting with Father to speak about my spiritual life. In the course of that hour, though,

it became clear that what I really needed was to be unburdened of my sins. So I asked for the absolution of God and his church. We sat across from each other in the room, and I recounted my sins as the priest listened with a peace and calm—a joy, even—that revealed a confidence in God’s mercy for sinners.

But he had pronounced the absolution without giving me prayers to say or Scriptures to read or some good deed to be accomplished.



Unsplash/ Annie Spratt

“No, I didn’t,” he replied with a smile. “I told you to enjoy the mercy and love of God. If I’d given you something more to do, either you’d do it and think you earned God’s grace or you’d fail and think you let God down. Just go! Repent and believe the good news!”

“Repent!” cries out Jesus in Matthew’s Gospel, “for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!” During Lent, preaching like this is front and center in the life of the church. To repent is literally to change one’s mind. In this sense it is to turn

one’s mind toward God. And, scripturally speaking, there is no turning toward God without turning toward one another. The command to love the Lord our God is coupled with the command to love our neighbor as ourselves.

One of the most moving portions of Scripture, to me, is the final chapter of the Book of Genesis. This takes place at the end of the patriarch Jacob’s life. Joseph, who had long ago been sold into slavery by his brothers, had also long since forgiven them.



To repent is literally to change one's mind, to turn one's mind toward God.

But now that Jacob is dead, the brothers, thinking that perhaps Joseph had only feigned forgiveness to spare his father more sorrow, are worried that Joseph will now exact his revenge. Perhaps Joseph only pretended to forgive so that he would not break his father's heart. But now, the brothers fear, Joseph will use his power and authority to give them their just desserts. "What if Joseph still bears a grudge against us and pays us back in full for all the wrong that we did to him?" they ask.

The brothers therefore make up a lie: "Your father gave us this instruction before he died, 'Say to Joseph: I beg you, forgive the crime of your brothers and the wrong they did in harming you.'" It is an obvious lie. If Jacob had wanted this, would he not have told Joseph directly?

But the lie does not matter; Joseph does not care. In fact, "Joseph wept when they spoke [this way] to him." This picture of the forgiveness of Joseph's brothers is an icon of the forgiveness of God toward us. But it is just as much a challenge for us to forgive those who have done us wrong.

Forgiveness, of course, runs all through Scripture. It is, in a way, the whole point of the story of the Bible. The revelation we find in the sacred words is the story of an all-loving God forgiving a sinful humanity and reconciling them to himself (and one another). God is, in short, in the forgiveness business.

When, in the fullness of time, Jesus came to save us, central to his ethical teachings was the forgiveness of wrongs done. St. Peter, perhaps thinking himself very charitable and gracious indeed, asked Jesus, "Lord, how often will my brothers sin against me and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" But Jesus replied to him, "not seven times, but seventy times seven times." (Mt 18.21-22)

The author and activist Jim Forest writes that "the Greek word used in the Our Father for 'forgive,' *aphiemi*, means simply to let go, set aside or leave behind. The verb, understood in its Greek sense, reminds us that forgiveness is, like love, not a feeling, but an action involving the will rather than our emotions." And Jesus is saying, *If you want to be forgiven, you must also forgive those who have wronged you.*

Though I am a Catholic priest, I have the great honor of working at an Anglican seminary. They have a beautiful custom in their rite of reconciliation, found in the Episcopal Church's *Book of Common Prayer*. After the penitent has confessed his or her sins, the priest will ask, "Do you, then, forgive those who have sinned against you?" Only after an affirmative answer does the priest pronounce absolution.

Understood in this way, my forgiveness of those who have wronged me is a condition for God's forgiveness of me. And that is, perhaps, the way we experience forgiveness existentially. But theologically, I think the Bible offers us a deeper perspective.

The parable of the unforgiving servant reminds us of the proper order of reconciliation. The king who wishes to settle accounts with his servants finds that a servant owes him 10,000 talents—an impossible sum for an ordinary laborer to pay back. And the king, showing mercy, simply forgives the debt, just like that.

And then the servant finds a fellow servant who owes him 100 denarii, about four months' wages. Not a meager sum, but by no means impossible to repay. And the wicked servant has this man thrown into debtor's prison "until he should pay all his debt."

It is a clear story with an obvious moral. We, who have been forgiven an infinite and unpayable debt of our sins, are expected to forgive those who sin against us. So rather than seeing our forgiveness of others as the condition for God's forgiveness, we see that in the economy of God's salvation, the order is the other way around: God's forgiveness is the cause and empowerment of our forgiveness of others. God never demands of us what he has not first done.

We all know the experience of being wronged. Some of us know it all too painfully. Betrayal by a friend. An offense right within our own family. A sibling. A parent. A spouse. Maybe slander at work, a reputation sullied, a confidence betrayed. Or maybe you do not harbor anything that big. But there is that one person, a colleague or

superior who is just, day after day, hurtful or demanding or harsh or unkind. Maybe you have had the experience, as I have, of the person who, just by being the same room as you, gets your adrenaline flowing and your heart rate up. How am I to forgive such a person?

The answer is found in the compassion of God. We have been forgiven by him. We have been bought at a price. Like the servant who owed 10,000 talents, we have been freed; and that means we're in a place to forgive others. We have been empowered to forgive because we ourselves are not stuck in a debtor's prison. "For freedom Christ has set us free," as St. Paul put it.

This Lent, as we confess, recalling our wrongdoing, we must not forget the mercy of God poured out upon us that expects—and makes possible—our mercy for others. Lent is a good time, in the silence of our hearts, to bring before God those grudges that we might hold and to let them go.

And perhaps, if the grudge is significant enough, now is the time to seek out those who have wronged us, and forgive them. And we must see this effort not as some burden that is too great to bear, but as the releasing of a burden that we may already bear. Because our Lord himself, as he hung on the cross for the salvation of the world, already made such reconciliation possible. He called out, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."

The Rev. Geoffrey Mackey is a priest of the Byzantine Catholic Church and the dean of students at Trinity School for Ministry, an Anglican/Episcopal seminary in Western Pennsylvania.

Barabbas

By John Corgan

This is not how I saw it happening, no:
my name to be remembered—a wild-eyed
goat-man, saved from the slaughter by that elect
and exile people whom I, once fervent,
intended to save.

They have denied me now even a martyrdom—
and myself the rebel's crown—for the comfort
of Roman subdual, in pace, in static subjection
to repose and abide. I am a wretch of rebel promise,
and I have let myself be duped.

Was it not you who singed my lips and cracked
my head on holy stones? Am I not forged in every fiber
from earth and spirit all your own? I am undone
in ancient purpose, and I am


Free to count my fettered bones.

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Or to ransom them still—all within me, a temple:
unsundered because inaccessible, as only
a madness made pure in vocation. My seeping
heritage marks me to hallow—and harrow—
a spark upon sparks, to the fire of the age

Of revolution. And redemption: all they have called me,
and all I reclaim—murderer, blasphemer, riotmonger, fool—
dissolves, now. I am resolved, now.

I cannot escape my name.

John Corgan was born and raised in northeastern Pennsylvania. He is an alumnus of the Jesuit Volunteer Corps and currently lives in Brooklyn, N.Y.



A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A PARISH LIFE DIRECTOR

Hint: It involves sunrises, bus passes, Mass and lots of patience

By Elizabeth Simcoe

The day begins with a beautiful sunrise: pinks, purples and blues that help dispel the heaviness of our continued slogging through a Covid-19 world. As we begin to assemble for Mass, everyone comments on what they had seen. Father F says he had reoriented his chair for morning prayer so he could watch the day unfolding. God will not be outdone in generosity.

I serve this community, the Church of St. Vincent De-Paul, as a parish life director, a position also known as parish life coordinator, which is a lay leader of a parish under the norms of Canon 517.2: “The diocesan bishop [may decide] that participation in the exercise of the pastoral care of a parish [may be] entrusted to a deacon, to another person who is not a priest or to a community of persons.”

After the first Mass of the day, Terrence and Davion, regulars at the parish, wait at the entrance to ask for help: a grocery store gift card for Terrence and the same, plus a one-day bus pass, for Davion. But Davion had an additional problem: a swollen face and an emergency room report with a prescription for antibiotics. “I don’t know how I am going to pay for this,” he says. “It costs \$40.”

We are not exactly sure what Davion’s living arrangements are. I suspect that his one-day bus passes are used not so much to take him from one place to another as they are a way for him to stay safe and out of the cold.

I tell Davion I would think about how to deal with the prescription. I don’t like to give cash. I try to call the pharmacy to pay for it by credit card but become lost in a purgatory of voice mail prompts. I ask Davion to take the scrip to the pharmacy and tell him that I will go with him to pay for it after our next and last Mass.

People begin to gather again. The liturgical coordinator confesses that she feels very safe with our Covid-19 protocols but comes to church only when she has an assignment. “It’s just not the same without all the people.” I nod. I know what she means.

This Mass takes place without any untoward moments. Father F’s self-deprecating humor in the homily hits home with the assembly, bringing them into his faith journey and inviting them to deepen theirs. After Mass, he and I consult on how the news of his cancer diagnosis and impending surgery will be shared with the community. How do we encourage prayerful support without exposing too much personal information?

Father F is much appreciated by the community. Having retired from diocesan ministry and pastoring one of the largest parishes in our diocese, he brings a wealth of experience and insight into what it means to follow the disciple’s path. When the toilet is plugged up, the elevator stops working or only one altar server shows up, he turns



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to me and says, “This is why I am glad you are in charge.”

Bishop Howard J. Hubbard initiated the ministry of the parish life director in the Albany Diocese in the 1980s, providing particularly for rural communities. The first parish life directors were vowed religious. A neighboring priest would celebrate Mass and the sacraments.

Eventually, it came to be seen that urban and suburban parishes could be led through this model. Many priests were retiring from their roles as pastors but still wanted to serve in ministry. They did not want the headaches of administration nor did they want to be “road warriors,” traveling the highways of the diocese to assist in an ad hoc way with the sacramental life of communities. Parish life directors could lead parishes in collaboration with these retired priests or priests with a diocesan leadership assignment. Bishop Edward Scharfenberger, Bishop Hubbard’s successor, has continued to make these appointments.

The job description is included in the guidelines from the National Association of Church Personnel Administrators, which are used throughout the United States. In the Albany Diocese, a parish life director’s background is expected to include advanced theological education and parish administrative experience.

Relevant experience might include having worked as a faith formation director, for example.

None of the aspects of ministry performed on this particular Sunday that I described—assisting the poor, supporting liturgical ministers, ensuring the smooth celebration of the liturgy and providing for the well-being of the congregation—require the faculties given through ordination, but they do require leadership abilities.

When St. Paul traveled around the Mediterranean basin establishing faith communities—churches—he entrusted them to various leaders: Nympha, Stephanus, Aquila and Priscilla, for example. The notion of the priesthood as we see it today had not yet developed. With ever-declining numbers of ordained clergy to lead parishes, is it possible that the Holy Spirit is inviting the church to expand the areas of ministry of those who belong to the priesthood of the baptized?

During the week, I collaborate with staff members on plans for faith formation programs, communications to and with the parish, allocation of funds, preparations for

future liturgical celebrations and maintaining our level of service to our elderly and homebound and the poor in our neighborhood. I meet with parishioners for spiritual counseling or just to chat. Periodically, I meet with the Pastoral and Stewardship Councils and attend Adult Faith Formation committee meetings, team meetings and sessions for the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. It is a very full plate. Mostly, I see myself as an orchestra conductor, helping all these fine musicians create a beautiful symphonic piece, our parish, in service to the people of God.

Returning to that particular Sunday, when the last Mass had ended, Phillip wanted to talk with me about finding a place for his grandson to live. His grandson has a low-paying job and has been sleeping on friends’ couches. Phillip and his wife live in senior housing and cannot take him in. “Does Catholic Charities have anything?” he asks. I am not hopeful but say I will think about what might be available. I ask him to ask his grandson to give me a call.

Davion is waiting for me while I tidy up and confer with the parishioner who is leading a physically distanced art program about the plan for securing the building when they are done.

Davion and I drive to the pharmacy and walk together to the service counter. He starts to ask for his prescription and the clerk brushes him off, turning her attention to me. Davion is African-American; my ancestry is European. I explain to the clerk that I am paying for Davion’s prescription. Her focus returns to Davion to get his birthdate. Speaking again to me, she calls me “Hon” and “Dear.” There is so much work to be done in this world.

Getting into the car, I look down at the receipt I will turn in to our bookkeeper. I had not known what Davion’s last name was but now I see it on the prescription form: “Shepherd.” Matthew 25 comes to mind and I whisper a prayer.

Elizabeth Simcoe has served as a lay ecclesial minister for 34 years in the roles of faith formation director, retreat leader and spiritual director, campus minister, director of a diocesan Prayer and Worship Office and chancellor.

Watch America’s new documentary short on lay parish leadership featuring Elizabeth Simcoe at youtube.com/americanmedia.

‘It’s important for us to help create and educate good men.’

An interview with Grace Cotter Regan, the first woman president of BC High

By Molly Cahill

Courtesy BC High

In 2017, Grace Cotter Regan became the first woman president of Boston College High School, a Jesuit, all-boys college preparatory school in Boston, Mass. Ms. Regan is the first woman to serve in the role in the school’s more than 150-year history. (Ms. Regan also serves on the board of directors of America Media.)

Ms. Regan earned undergraduate and graduate degrees from Boston College, then served as a post-collegiate volunteer with the Jesuit Volunteer Corps in Belize. She has worked in advancement and communications at high schools, universities, the Boston Public Library Foundation and the former New England Province of the Society of Jesus. All of this, along with her passion for the Jesuit philosophy of education, has helped her respond to the challenges of her role, including the threat of Covid-19 and reckoning with the school’s history of addressing questions of race.

This interview has been edited for clarity and length.

How did you become the first woman president of BC High, and what has the experience been like?

I have a long history with the school. My dad was there for 50 years as a teacher, coach and guidance counselor—he was really an iconic figure at the school. I grew up there. I made every major life decision at BC High. Anything I ever decided, I met with my dad in the cafeteria to make the decision.

And then I went on to have my own life. I never expected to be a head of school. The lion’s share of my career has been in advancement, communications, brand, fundraising. When I was working for the New England Province of the Jesuits, I went to the provincial superi-

or, Myles Sheehan, S.J., and said: “I think I want to lead a school. I’ve advanced all these leaders, and I think I know what I’m doing.” Within weeks, I had a few interviews, and I took a role at St. Mary’s in Lynn, Mass., which is a socio-economically challenged area. The school was struggling, so I spent almost seven years turning it around. [The school] just opened a brand-new building, which I’m very happy to say. We created a whole new enrollment plan and offerings for academics.

I was contacted about the role at BC High in the summer of 2016, but I was really loving where I was. I was finishing up a \$22 million campaign for St. Mary’s. I just didn’t feel the timing was right, so I pulled myself out of the search. They did not find a candidate in the spring of 2017, and they came back to me in June and asked if I would reconsider. Ultimately, I was selected. It was kind of serendipitous. My dad always used to tell me, “When God winks at you once, pay attention. But if he winks at you twice, you *really* have to pay attention.” I felt it was a vocational calling.

Being in an all-male environment, I am very mindful of being a strong role model, not only for women who might be aspiring to be in leadership at some point, but also for the boys. My principal, Adam Lewis, and I talk a lot about how difficult it is to be a young man in today’s culture. It’s important for us to help create and educate good men. One of the things I bring to that is I’m a mother of two boys. As a mom, I feel like I can really meet them where they are. I think for boys, especially teenage boys, sometimes all they need is someone just to ask, “How are you doing?”

Your community is working toward a cultural shift around the issue of race. Can you tell me what precipitated that and what it looks like now?

The spring of 2020 was challenging in many ways: Covid, virtual learning, the death of George Floyd and all that went along with it. An Instagram account [that highlighted the ways in which it was challenging to be a black student at BC High] was started, and a lot of the things written on the account were shocking and horrifying. We took the approach that this cannot happen at BC High. We had to have an institutional response from a justice perspective. We had to make sure our alumni, students, faculty and parents of color understood that we were standing with them and accompanying them on this journey. We hit things head on in terms of taking responsibility for our culture, with the understanding that our school should be inclusive and safe, and our students should have a strong experience. If we're not doing that, then we need to address and remedy that. It needs to be a cultural shift.

Our board wanted to do an investigation, so they hired an outside consultant. They've been doing a study of our policies and procedures, looking at the Instagram account and giving anyone who wants it an opportunity to speak about their experience at BC High.

We've taken it upon ourselves internally to embark on a program that could really be meaningful for our school. We did implicit-bias training for our faculty and staff. We entered into a program called Courageous Conversations, which is a curriculum for creating cultural change. The premise is that the leadership has to own the protocol so we can bring that to the community. This summer, we offered antiracism conversations over Zoom. I fielded about 200 phone calls personally. Our approach was about listening and sitting with the discomfort in order to think about our culture and how we are going to deal with it.

We're also looking at our curriculum to make sure it meets the needs of our students, including our young men of color.

Probably the best thing we've done is a student program to share our stories. In December, two of our young men of color spoke in front of our school in our gymnasium and Zoomed into the classrooms.

How have you seen BC High's responses to Covid-19 and to racism as related?

One thing I'm really proud of is that we have an emergency financial aid fund that helped many of our students to stay at BC High through the Covid pandemic; but we also are delivering hotspots and modems, as well as food carts,

to students who are food insecure. You don't know what people don't have. As a Jesuit school, we want to make sure anyone on the margins is taken care of.

Some of our kids also live in tough areas, and they aren't comfortable sharing their homes [onscreen during virtual learning]. We created backgrounds for students to use on Zoom so they could be creative and have fun and still engage in class with their cameras on without feeling embarrassed about their background.

A number of our faculty and staff virtually attended the People of Color Conference with our principal this year. One of the presenters talked about schools' responses to Covid: how we all pivoted, transitioned, stepped up. This presenter said: "What if this world took the same approach to antiracism we did with Covid? What if we made that commitment and said we are making this happen?"

We are going to be an antiracist school. We are going to have a community that is loving and embracing and safe for our students. Simple as that.

What do you think makes Jesuit education meaningful at the high school level?

For me, Jesuit education is about relationships. I go back to Pedro Arrupe [former Superior General of the Jesuits] coining the phrase "men for others," which has become "men and women for others." For us at BC High, it's about creating good young people who are committed to justice and will be compassionate, ethical leaders.

When a young man graduates from BC High, he'll be able to lean on the spirituality he learned here for the rest of his life. He'll have a network of 15,000 alumni to support him. He will be a global citizen, having had the opportunity to travel through our programs and communicate with other schools around the world.

The most beautiful moment of the week for me is Wednesday morning, when our entire school stops to do the Examen. I could be in a board meeting, but I stop. It's a transformational, action-oriented experience. That is what Jesuit education is about for me.

Molly Cahill is a 2020-21 O'Hare fellow at America and a graduate of Boston College.

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



At the same time I haven't been recognizing beauty, I also haven't been recognizing God. What if those disconnects are related?

Searching for Beauty in the Age of Instagram

By Erika Rasmussen

A few weeks ago, my mom came back from a trip to Moab, Utah, bearing gifts: a miniature orange buffalo made of calcite, a flamingo-pink ball cap and a half-dollar-sized hunk of fool's gold. My family chatted around the dinner table as I rolled the cool rock around in my palm, new hat on head, letting it glint in the kitchen light. "Man, this thing should be beautiful to me," I thought to myself. A hundred little surfaces winked gold, shadow, gleam.

And it *was* beautiful—but somehow it also wasn't. Because, since my toddler days, I have lived and moved in a world where fake rubies adorn fuzzy dress-up gear, where the gift shop at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science lets you snap up crystals like they were Cracker Jacks and where I can buy myself a pair of 18-karat gold-filled earrings for \$50.

An alarm sounded: *Beauty isn't dawning on me like it should.* There was something beautiful in front of me, but somehow the beauty itself wasn't registering. It didn't make me feel a thing. *Have I been desensitized?* If beauty reveals, as Hans Urs von Balthasar wrote, "the truth and goodness of the depths of reality," am I a welcoming host to its revelation?

At the same time I haven't been recognizing beauty every time it is before me, I also haven't been recognizing God. What if those disconnects are related?

In a society driven by productivity and immersed in overstimulating

environments, where social media has actually programmed us to ignore inflections of beauty because they're "just another pretty picture" or song or face, we have become numb to the constant beauty that is unfolding God before us. But beauty speaks. As with beauty, God is. God unfolds. God gives the breath, and God takes it away.

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Early in 2020, before the pandemic hit, I spoke with a Carmelite named Sister Maura. Her monastery sits a mile down Benton Street from Santa Clara University. Visitors can walk next to an olive grove, among redwoods and roses and wisteria. At a certain point, I was walking there nearly every day to taste the peace. I wanted to learn about this sanctuary for the final project of my senior seminar, in which we were studying the rhetoric of place. I focused on the idea of history and how commemorative plaques form collective memory—everything (everything) communicates.

When I asked Sister Maura how she thought the monastery's space communicated rhetorically, she told me: "It all points to God." All the rooms carry stark simplicity, she explained: white walls, wooden crucifix. There are no distractions, she was saying. All God.

It made me think about the beauty of a simple line—the meeting of three walls at the corner of a room. Trinity. What points to God, and how

we might be missing it.

The internet has become a sort of distribution center, especially for the visual. I might not bat an eye at a photo of a green-eyed Himalayan snow creature, or at the jade-water mountainscapes of Thailand—exquisite—because since I was 15 I have used phones that have tossed photos of impossible, faraway things at me daily. Instagram, Pinterest, Twitter, Tumblr, not to mention Hallmark cards, billboards, TV; there are calendar stores full of these images.

I can capture every spectacular moment of life on my iPhone—a beautiful reproduction or object around every corner, on every visit to social media, slapped on what seems like every surface imaginable. The saturation makes me feel like the full force of beauty itself is being subdued; like I'm becoming desensitized. I'm being programmed to scroll right past it.

I don't think life was always this overstimulating, and the overstimulation has something to do with influx. The advent of manufacturing in the late 1700s in Europe, and then the invention of lithography in 1796, made printed art mass-producible. In the United States between 1870 and World War I, factories of the second industrial revolution began to streamline on-demand beauty. For the first time fabricated splendor became available to the masses: sets of china that didn't cost a fortune, rhinestones

I possess and see so much beautiful stuff that much of its frank, intrinsic beauty is somewhat lost on me. 💧💧

that lit up the human body (with no need to dig into the earth to bring forth that precious glimmer).

This revolution democratized certain forms of beauty, yes—very good—but it may have also taken away a certain sense of beauty’s novelty; its shock value, its grab-you-by-the-shoulders lightning bolt of awe. Now, over a century later, I possess and see so much beautiful *stuff* that much of its frank, intrinsic beauty is somewhat lost on me. Sensation dwindles. Not because these things aren’t beautiful, but because I’ve been around these lovely things so much I don’t always bother to pay attention.

And for many of us in this pandemic, our immediate walls and ecosystem have become the world. Our screen time skyrockets. As March stretched into April and leaped into summer and fall, my iPhone so kindly notified me every week of the growing minutes I was spending glued to the screen. If I was addicted to Instagram before, now I’m really in deep.

Our phones connect us to one another and the world in profoundly vital ways moment to moment; but the intimacy we share with these rect-

angles of light toys with our energy, health and attentiveness! It is light, and it can bring us a timeline of delight (or misery). But we are letting beauty elude us. The extraordinary has become humdrum.

And in the thick of this disease, of viral chaos and isolation, our bodies are craving the intimacy of beauty, whether we know it or not. We probably crave beauty because we crave God, and beauty reveals something of God. Especially in these trying times, our need and desire for God’s love might be laid bare, if it wasn’t obvious before.

I am sure many of us may have, in different moments during these months, been brought to our wit’s end. We need God deeply, and so we need beauty deeply, too. Do we perceive every ounce of it, the beauty that hangs so delicately and intimately on each quark of this little universe?

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In *Heaven and Hell*, Aldous Huxley writes that “modern technology has had the same devaluating effect on glass and polished metal as it has had on fairy lamps and pure, bright colours.” Huxley cites John of Patmos,

who is possibly the author of the Book of Revelation. He writes: for “John of Patmos and his contemporaries walls of glass were conceivable only in the New Jerusalem.” A “glut” of glass and metal, Huxley calls it: “surfaces [that] wink at us in the bathroom, shine from the kitchen sink, go glittering across country in cars and trams.”

There are some days I want to sweep all my belongings into trash bags, scour my shelves and walls of all things *thing* until there’s nothing left but me and bare walls, bare wood. All I want is God—the good and the true and the beautiful. This “glut” of modern lifestyle just might subdue my intimacy with the truth of being itself.

An artist who renders a still life has always reminded us that the bare, everyday bits of life are lifegiving. Transcendent. God the Beautiful is in communion with the present world.

In her poem “Evidence,” Mary Oliver writes:

*Beauty without purpose is
beauty without virtue. But
all beautiful things,
inherently, have this
function—
to excite the viewers toward
sublime thought. Glory
to the world, that good
teacher.*

Are we wholly allowing the world to be that good teacher?

St. Ignatius Loyola dug into the constant presence of God. Different versions of his Daily Examen prayer exercise instruct us to look back on our day with careful, God-seeking vision. We ask for the ability to notice God’s presence in each moment; we give thanks for particular experiences of the day and then look back on them

to see where God was. Finally, we seek forgiveness for those times we failed to love, and we close with a petition for grace to fill tomorrow. This prayer and intention is also beauty-seeking vision. Asking to see where God is revealed might be the same as asking to notice the beautiful. And beauty arrives. Constantly.

I am most thankful these days for the sunlight that shines out of gasoline puddles and skyscrapers alike; the pudgy shuffling of dachshunds on tiny, perfect legs; the laughter of a stranger (or a roommate, through the wall) that has nothing to do with me but beats its wings between us anyway to sit in my chest; the creature of my body that does exactly what it pleases when a good song plays—any good song, any sort of good; the playground of shadows that comes out at night, when Thomas Edison keeps us awake and looking.

Poetry, prayer, mindfulness and art all have something in common. They can defamiliarize the reality that unfolds before us, make experience spring up anew. Some things that have gone numb need a good dose of resurrection. This includes *the moment*. When we pray, we see things as if for the first time. When we notice what's right there in the moment, it is God.

In "Of Nicolette," the poet E. E. Cummings presents the lily in soft glory:

*a Winged Passion woke and
one by one
there fell upon the night, like
angel's tears,
the syllables of that
mysterious prayer,
and as an opening lily
drowsy-fair
(when from her couch of*

*poppy petals peers
the sleepy morning) gently
draws apart
her curtains, and lays bare her
trembling heart*

Poets most simply *notice*. Everyone has this power. Our daily life can rise up in "syllables" of "mysterious prayer" if we take the time to revel and stew in it. Ross Gay offers an embodied sort of prayer in "becoming a horse":

*It was
touching my nose to his made
me know
the clover's bloom, my wet
eye to his
made me know the long field's
secrets.*

Life is calling us to touch our noses to the moment, fix our wet eyes to whatever hint of heaven may be present. How can we, in this saturated society, craft our lives and cultivate our psyches to realize the beauty present there, in a way that opens us further to grace?

On a recent trip to Albany, N.Y., with **America's** video team to film a short documentary, I was pulled back into the world of photography in which I grew up. My mother is a photographer and an artist, and much of my childhood was spent in front of the camera or fingering through photographs of water lilies and cathedrals—faces and landforms from a lifestyle of overseas travel and Colorado living.

I wasn't that into it as a kid. But being handed a fancy camera again this past year, as I entered my 23rd year of life, has been like being handed new eyes. The viewfinder and process of capturing a particular moment in eternity opens up this posture of looking—of surrender to the beau-

tiful—that is possible and present in every direction if we take the time to reframe ourselves.

As Richard Powers writes in *The Overstory*, "The only dependable things are humility and looking." Most of what a camera does is what eyes do—what consciousness does. "Looking" in the way of seeking. Noticing. Focusing. Click.

Can touch be beautiful? Have you ever felt your own skin? And the sound of cars beating like waves down the highway. A spring rain in the nostrils. *You know!* The glide of water across our hands and backs—water, our birthplace. *Water!* That glossy little mango sitting on your table, that never-ending lineup of windows that bend light across the entire town to get to *you*, that stupid hunk of fool's gold that now follows you around like a kid that won't stop nagging. *Look!* Where is the beauty in it? Where? *Where?*

I want God. I want every reflection. If I were a minimalist; if I kept clicking the red X over the Instagram app forever; if I closed my eyes a bit more often and asked that opening them would bring revelation; if I wrote a poem every day; if all that was left on my walls was the engraving of clay hands reaching for the sun that hangs there now; then, might the beauty of both earth-made and human-made creation—line, color, wave—spur me into greater awareness of God as God, God as love, God as life itself?

Erika Rasmussen is a Joseph A. O'Hare, S.J., fellow at America.



Joni Mitchell, before the brilliance of 'Blue'

By Rob Weinert-Kendt

3

The biographical fallacy—the idea that artists’ work should be interpreted primarily in light of the events of their lives—has dogged Joni Mitchell from the start of her public career as a singer/songwriter. Guessing which lover or friend inspired which song has long been a parlor game for her fans, and in some cases this intention is unconcealed. “Song for Sharon” has its dedicatee, a childhood friend named Sharon Bell, in the title; “Willy” was her nickname for longtime housemate Graham Nash.

But this is a limiting, and arguably sexist, way to view her song catalogue, which ranks among the greatest a (Canadian-) American artist has produced, from the universality of hits like “Both Sides, Now” and “Big Yellow Taxi” to the complicated idiosyncrasies of narrative songs like “Harry’s House/Centerpiece” or the piano/orchestra suite “Paprika Plains.” For a run of 10 albums between 1968 and 1979, from the folky “Song to a Seagull” to the jazz-inspired “Mingus,” Mitchell had one of the legendary hot streaks in pop

music, rivaled among her peers only by the likes of Stevie Wonder or Bob Dylan.

Like Randy Newman or Leonard Cohen, Mitchell was at first a songwriter’s songwriter, whose tunes were mostly hits for other singers. That all changed with the 1971 album “Blue,” which included a string of career-defining tracks (“All I Want,” “A Case of You,” “California,” “River,” “Carey”) written and recorded during her fertile sojourn as part of a cross-pollinating music scene in Los Angeles’s Laurel Canyon neighborhood, along-

side the likes of Crosby, Stills & Nash, Neil Young and James Taylor.

The records that followed—including my two favorites of hers, "For the Roses" and "Hejira"—built on the confessional, intimate tone of "Blue" but also departed from it, rendering thornier subjects across ever more ambitious soundscapes. While this sonic adventuring alienated some of her fans (and her post-1980 output has been considerably spottier, with a few exceptions), time has vindicated these later experiments; and her creative influence on generations of musicians, from Prince to Brandi Carlisle, is tectonic.

A new, five-CD boxed set, titled "Joni Mitchell Archives Vol. 1: The Early Years (1963-1967)," shines a light on the period before she landed a record deal, from early folk demos she recorded at a Saskatchewan radio station to live sets at Toronto coffeehouses and clubs, where she tried out the songs that would later fill her first few records. At nearly six hours of material, much of it repetitive if not quite redundant, it may collect the music that introduced Joni Mitchell to the world, but it hardly makes the ideal introduction for the uninitiated. Its chief audience would seem to be the diehard fans who can detect slight differences of inflection among different versions of the same song.

Still, like a master painter's sketchbooks, "Archives" is uniquely revealing of the roots of Mitchell's distinctive voice both as a singer and a writer. She begins the early 1960s with a repertoire of folk standards, from "John Hardy" to "Molly Malone," played on a baritone ukulele and warbled in a prim so-

prano. This soon gives way to more far-ranging covers, a more aggressive vocal attack and the addition of dulcimer and guitar to her arsenal.

Most strikingly, on the faux-calypto song "Sail Away," made popular by the folk music trio the Journeymen, her arrangement uses a jarring tritone chord progression that is not in the original. It sounds for all the world like the kind of "mistake" amateurs stumble upon as they are learning their craft, but it is a sign of Mitchell's genius that she plays it with a joyous confidence and makes it work for the song. She would later use the same progression in some of her more ambitious compositions.

By the time her originals start to appear, they sound a bit like some of the darker, quieter folk material she's been playing; this is no longer the willowy innocent from the plains of Saskatoon. "Day After Day" and "Urge for Going" are hard-bitten accounts of women trapped and chafing at their lot. Before long they give way not only to the philosophical musings of such accessible classics as "The Circle Game" and "Both Sides, Now," but also to a raft of intensely personal, even peculiar artisanal creations.

Some show the influence of Dylan, who was at the time expanding the definition of folk to encompass a wild, word-drunk individualism. But most are distinctly and unmistakably Joni: musically brilliant, lyrically knotty, tuned to a station only she can hear. It is this vein she would go on to tap in her best work; even her most ebullient pop creations would spring from the same well of nuance and complication she discovered in these early years.

It's true that some of this development, including the darkening and deepening of her sound, can be traced to the tumult of her personal life: an unintended pregnancy, a brief marriage of convenience (not to the child's father), the giving up of the child for adoption, a scramble to make ends meet as a single art student. Mitchell has made no secret of the way these early shocks were transmuted into musical inspiration. But on the evidence of "Archives Vol. 1," her artistry reached a high level, well beyond a merely therapeutic purpose, very early on.

Take "Little Green," for example. A coded farewell to the child she gave up for adoption, it appears here in a nascent form, with the same lyrics but slightly different music—another ear-bending chord progression, in fact, which she later scrapped for the more straightforward version we know from "Blue." We don't need to know the song's backstory to feel its loss, disorientation and bittersweet resolution. And we can hear in this early take, and in several others, the sound of an artist carving her path through the intertwined thickets of her life and her art. It is for the latter that Mitchell is rightly cherished.

Rob Weinert-Kendt, an arts journalist and editor of *American Theatre* magazine, has written for *The New York Times* and *Time Out New York*. He writes a blog called *The Wicked Stage*.

Year of the Rat

By Amit Majmudar

Our sons had the spines of sad old men,
Hook-necked and hooked on laptop screens
In the simulation of a school
In a simulation of their teens.
Our daughters danced to please an app,
Their youth, a data point for sale,
Mere truth, a dandelion clock
That shred itself into the gale.
Money made love to money, as ever,
And money made more money still.
Why wouldn't governors dine out
With you and me to foot the bill?
Hush, or they'll fire us for laughing,
And we'll be left without our checks,
Dreaming, enraged, of reckonings,
Returned again to rags and wrecks.
Our parents perished in beeping rooms,
Their funerals pixellated: freezing:
Freezing again: a heartbeat, skipped:
Even their cessation ceasing.
How do we kiss when breath is deadly?
How do we speak when speech is a duel?
How do we die but by the thousands,
Sloganeering our renewal?
I, too, have been a zealot in
My day, I, too, have been a cynic,
But I saw only human beings
Shrouded in rows behind the clinic.
What brand of breathlessness for you?
Gamble on age, rely on luck,
But fire up the excavator,
Send the refrigerated truck.
The bankers waltzed the wraith of wealth,
Coffers and coffins to either side
While the Dollar Store was burning down:
Great Pandemic, Great Divide.
This is my country, these, my people,

One neverending shout, unmasked.
A love that loves the half that's like me
Isn't the love this year has asked
Because our task is love perforce,
Through gritted teeth, through fear and noise
To work the words that will unwarp
The world and give that love its voice.

Amit Majmudar's latest poetry collection is *What He Did in Solitary* (Knopf, 2020). His forthcoming novels include *The Map and the Scissors* (HarperCollins India, 2022), as well as *The Mahabharata Trilogy* (Penguin India, first volume in 2022).

 Listen to Amit Majmudar recite his poem in an interview with **America** on the podcast "Church Meets World." Find it at americamagazine.org/podcasts or wherever you listen to podcasts.



Anna and the Blind Tobit, c. 1630 by Rembrandt van Rijn



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A lover of God, surrounded by geniuses

By Mary Gordon

"I am a witness of the invisible," the poet and painter Max Jacob said. "God has intoxicated me."

You have probably never heard of Max Jacob. A gifted poet and painter, he had the good luck and misfortune to live in a circle of geniuses. The circle formed itself around Pablo Picasso, whom Jacob met in Paris in 1901. Jacob called this meeting the most important event of his life. Rosanna Warren, herself a distinguished poet, devoted 30 years to writing a life of Max Jacob, so that he might become better known in the English-speaking world.

Not for a moment does the reader question whether this was time well spent. Rather, we are grateful to have encountered this fascinating figure who not only represents an extraordinary historical moment, but also reminds us of the complex possibilities of a life lived passionately, ardently, fully and in torment.

Jacob was born in 1876 in the province of Brittany, in the town of Quimper. If the name Quimper rings a bell, it is because the town is the

home of a kind of pottery that depicts a pastoral fantasy of French peasants happily laboring at their traditional tasks. But the Jacobs were not a family of peasants. They were shopkeepers. They were also the only Jews in town.

Max was the unhappy son of the family. He loathed his mother, pitied his father and could not wait to leave home. At the age of 18, he made his way to Paris. One of the great pleasures of Warren's writing is her vivid evocation of the city at this extraordinary moment: It was not only the capital of the arts; it was the capital of a country riven by political drama and caught in a whirlwind of social and technological change.

In the cultural realm, writers, painters and musicians in Paris were creating what would come to be known as Modernism. They were committed to pushing the limits of representation, of narrative and form. Picasso and Georges Braque were inventing Cubism, a new way of seeing

the world. Guillaume Apollinaire was reinventing poetic language, Igor Stravinsky was reinventing serious music, Sergei Diaghilev was reinventing ballet, Marcel Proust was reinventing the novel, Coco Chanel was reinventing clothes.

Days of extraordinary creative production were followed by long nights fueled by alcohol and drugs. Jacob developed his predilections for both gay rough trade and hopeless romantic attachments to beautiful young men. When he was broke, he cast horoscopes and hired himself out to rich people who wanted him to ensure that their parties would not be boring. This lightness of spirit enabled him to travel with ease among tones and genres.

In the autumn of 1909, Max Jacob had a vision. Jesus appeared on the wall of his apartment and then again on a movie screen. His life was changed forever. "I am a witness of the invisible," he said. "God has intoxicated me." But

Max Jacob
A Life in Art and Letters
By Rosanna Warren
W. W. Norton
720p \$45

it took six years for him to be baptized, both because of his own doubts and because a number of the priests whom he approached doubted his sincerity. Picasso was his godfather.

Conversion could only separate Jacob from the very people he cared about: artists determined to shake off the limiting shackles of the past, who wanted to redefine the relationship to the past not as a straight line but as a series of ruptures that acknowledged the disconnections that modernity produced.

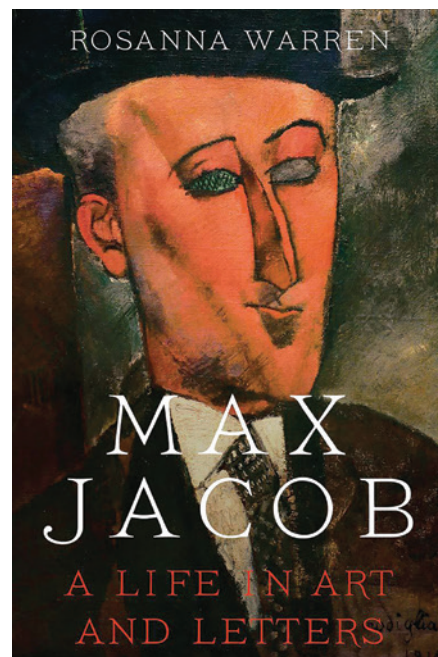
The Catholic Church set itself up in firm opposition to these ruptures in the 1907 encyclical by Pope Pius X, "Against Modernism." While this document did not focus overtly on the kind of modernism Picasso and Stravinsky represented, it set itself against a kind of thought that questioned eternal truths—and certainly the authority of the church. Paradoxically, this immobility appealed to Jacob's desire to curb his own excesses, "the desire to please, the vanity of showing off one's talent, all this grinding mechanism of pleasure, the escalator that carries you farther along the route laid out by happenstance."

But the church that Jacob was converting to was not the church of Pius X, nor the church defended by the tag team of Augustine or Aquinas. The Catholic Church he loved was the church of the mystics, the church that made a place for extravagant beauty, for the antic, the inexplicable, the church of the Feast of Fools and the gargoyles on the facades of the great cathedrals; the church of the "good thief" on his cross and Zacchaeus in his tree, of St. Teresa, whose bowels were pierced by an angel's golden arrows.

Warren explores the outlines and interiors of Jacob's religious life with the same lucidity and precision that made possible her masterful evocation of the artistic milieu of Jacob's Paris. She describes his religious path as "the effort by a person who experienced himself as plural to make himself whole: to be Jewish and Catholic, Breton and Parisian, worldly and ascetic, manly and womanly."

But baptism did not magically end the conflicts that were the hallmark of Jacob's nature. Fleeing the temptations of Paris, he installed himself in a rectory connected to a defunct Benedictine monastery in Saint Benoît, a small town on the Loire. For a while he found peace, but the narrowness of vision of the priests with whom he shared a rectory began to grate. Periodically he escaped to Paris for friendship and for sex, although he was convinced that "these affairs led to eternal damnation...." He felt his life as "excruciating self-division: the penitential ideal of Saint Benoit alongside the squalor of shameful love."

Central to Jacob's religious vision was the figure of the incarnate Christ, who provided, in Warren's words, "the single mediating figure who could connect sacred and earthly spheres and embody a supreme love impossible in merely human connection." He could not and would not invoke an image of Jesus without the element of the erotic. He created a series of Stations of the Cross in which Jesus is rendered as young, virile and desirable: in fact, Jacob's lover. The artist entreats Christ to "open my rib cage, touch my loins with the finger that



wrote in sand."

His anguishes and his triumphs were of no consequence to the Nazis who had occupied France. For them, Jacob was just a Jew. In 1943, he was arrested and sent to an internment camp. His friends, led by Cocteau, attempted to have Jacob released by collecting signatures of influential artists. Picasso, afraid of the Gestapo, refused to sign.

Prisoners were kept in filthy, hopelessly overcrowded conditions and were kept alive on starvation rations until they could be shipped to the extermination camps. Jacob was slated for Auschwitz. He was weak and in fragile health, and he succumbed to pneumonia before he could board the death train. He died an agonizing death; his last words were to his doctor, "You have the face of an angel."

Shortly before his arrest, he said to a friend: "At least they can't take that away from me. I've loved."

Mary Gordon is the author of numerous novels, memoirs and literary criticism. Her most recent novel, *Payback*, was published by Pantheon in September 2020.



iStock

War minus the shooting

By John W. Miller

A quarter of Americans view China as the top threat to the United States.

Covid-19 has exacerbated tensions between China and the United States; but since 2017, under former president Donald J. Trump, the superpowers have squabbled over trade. The issue is that modern China is history's greatest exporting power. Last year, it shipped out \$2.5 trillion worth of manufactured goods, from the tires on my car and case on my iPhone to, probably, the shoes on your feet and the shirt on your back.

That Chinese workers and machines make the bits and pieces of our physical world is one of the defining political, economic and cultural stories of the early 21st century. The country's biggest market, the United States, has often relished "Made in China" because it has meant an influx of cheap goods to indulge an epic consumerist binge. At the same time, the outsourcing of production to China has crippled thousands of American manufacturing towns, especially in the Midwest, wounding communities, local businesses and main streets and setting the stage for the 2016 election

of Trump—the first U.S. leader since the Second World War to challenge the notion that free trade is a good thing. China's low-wage and low-cost manufacturing boom has fueled an American nightmare service economy where tens of millions of people labor for companies like Walmart and Amazon at less than \$15 an hour without benefits, union protection or any real prospect of a career.

Geopolitically, as the Wall Street Journal reporters Bob Davis and Lingling Wei chronicle in *Superpower Showdown*, the consequence is a new Cold War as the two sides figure out how to manage the repercussions of China's rise, including U.S. protectionism and tensions over Taiwan, military strength and human rights. At first glance, Washington and Beijing appear too economically entangled to risk a shooting war, but many chief executive officers think that is now a real possibility, according to Davis and Wei.

The tensions, certainly, are too high to be ignored. Already, they are having an economic impact. Chinese

exports to the United States are declining. Chinese investment in the United States shrank almost 90 percent in the first half of 2019 compared with the same period in 2017. A quarter of Americans view China as the top threat to the United States, double the percentage from 2007. Chinese academics now have a hard time getting visas.

The story starts in the 1970s, with President Nixon's diplomacy, the death of Chairman Mao and the pro-business reforms enacted by Deng Xiaoping. When the U.S. diplomat Henry Kissinger visited China in 1971, he said there were "practically no automobiles, very limited consumer goods and no high-rise buildings." Forty years later, China's per capita income had increased 25-fold, lifting hundreds of millions of people out of poverty.

It is no coincidence that China chose mercantilist capitalism just as Wall Street boomed in the 1980s. In Ronald Reagan's America, corporations shifted from a community ethos to a focus on conquering markets and creating massive economies of scale.

Chinese leaders were happy to sing the same tune. For example, Shenzhen, a former fishing village that is now a tech hub of 13 million people, chose the slogan: “Time is money, efficiency is life.” (Shenzhen now has a new slogan: “Follow the party, start your business.”) More Americans should realize they are dealing with a monster they helped create.

But, as the book describes in detail in my favorite section, in Washington there was little skepticism or worry about China’s rise. It was the roaring 1990s, and the United States was on top of the world after the end of the Cold War, possibly the most dominant military and economic power the world had ever seen. U.S. leaders did not feel they were giving anything away. They were helping the Chinese people, promoting the proven ideology of free trade and helping the corporate lobbies that helped elect them.

In 2001, thanks in large part to the support of the U.S. business community, which spent over \$100 million on lobbying, China joined the World Trade Organization. This guaranteed lower tariffs in imports and exports and more open markets around the globe. The material benefits Chinese workers have experienced since then are consequential. Between 1999 and 2018, the number of Chinese citizens living on two dollars a day or less dropped by almost 500 million, the biggest advance in prosperity any country has ever seen.

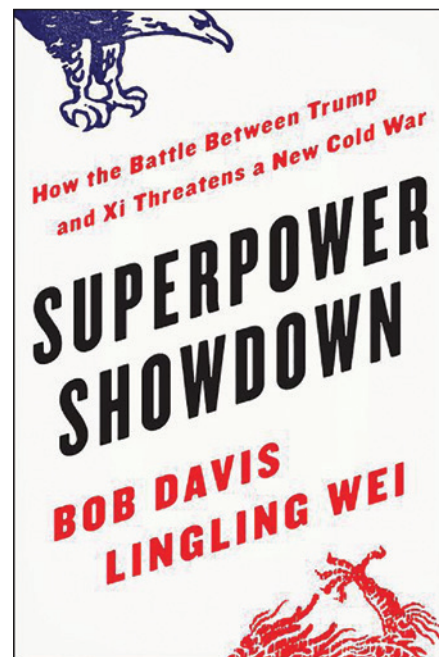
But China’s rise has also been driven by forces less innocent than hard work and Western consumer demand. Beijing has pushed an aggres-

sive industrial policy of state aid for its chosen companies, including export subsidies and other goodies that companies operating in real free markets do not receive.

At the same time, China has used access to its 1.4 billion-person consumer market as leverage to force U.S. and European companies to share technology it needs to advance in high-tech, aerospace and automotive industries. And, according to U.S. officials, it has made a habit of stealing intellectual property in other ways, including espionage. Davis and Wei quote former national security advisor John Bolton that the United States made a strategic error in inviting China into the capitalist club: “American policy was based on the assumption of bringing China into the WTO would increase pressure to conform to international norms in trade and business areas,” Bolton says. “That has obviously not happened.”

Both authors have a story of their own touched by the issues they write on. Wei herself suffered directly from China’s growing illiberalism. In March 2020, she was ordered by the government to leave the country. Davis, too, has experienced one of the main themes of the book firsthand. His father owned a luggage-making company in New York that was slowly driven out of business in the 1960s and early 1970s by Asian imports.

In the end, Davis admitted in an interview, reporters and economists missed “how many workers would be hurt in concentrated areas” of the United States. “The benefits to consumers, cheaper goods, were obvious

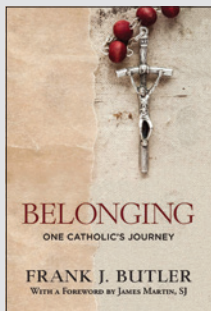


but diffuse.” Nobody is underestimating that pain now.

A shooting war is unlikely, in large part because businesses on both sides of the Pacific still have too much to lose. Any disentanglement of the two economies—or a “decoupling,” to use business consultant jargon—is a “fantasy,” according to the writers, because “the two nations are too intertwined.” American companies “spent a quarter century building global supply chains that stitched the economy of the two nations together.” In addition, China holds over a trillion dollars in U.S. government debt.

There is also little chance that the U.S. manufacturing boom fantasy that Trump promoted will come true. Youngstown will not be revived by factories. Yes, China has over a billion consumers, but almost everything they might want to buy is already made in China.

John W. Miller is a Pittsburgh-based writer and former staff reporter and foreign correspondent for *The Wall Street Journal*.



Belonging
One Catholic's
Journey
By Frank J. Butler
Orbis Books
208p \$25

A glad traveler

Tears come easier to me these days—maybe because I am older. Sometimes, while preaching, I will touch a deep vein and find it difficult to go on. I might be reading an autobiography and see a scene evoking a memory from my own journey—and I have to lay the book down as memories flood in. Such was my experience reading Frank J. Butler's autobiography, *Belonging: One Catholic's Journey*.

Butler lost his father at a young age, and his mother raised a family of six. At the age of 13, Butler entered a seminary in Little Rock, Ark., and spent eight years there in a world he generally describes as wonderful—a world in which one learned to pray and to work hard and to live with others.

In his studies, along with traditional Thomism, he was fortunate to be exposed to contemporary thinkers like Kierkegaard, Jaspers, Marcel and Heidegger.

Butler was sent by his bishop to The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. As he left the seminary in Arkansas, he thought, "I was moving on from a familiar, endearing place that had shaped my outlook on life, connected me to God in a deep loving friendship; and awakened a restlessness and ques-

tioning that would not let go."

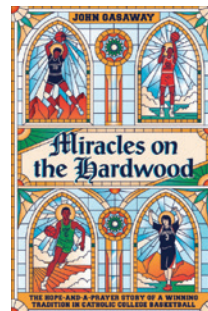
Butler eventually left the seminary and married. He would continue to work for the church in one way or another for the rest of his life: in Catholic health care, for the U.S. Catholic bishops, in Catholic philanthropy, on the "Support Our Aging Religious" campaign, in aiding the church in former communist countries and more.

Butler describes well the give and take of the sometimes clashing politics of church organizations. In many places where he worked, hierarchical power, defensiveness and conflicts over money interfered with the implementation of many good ideas.

Butler ends, however, on a beautiful note: the baptism of his granddaughter, Eleanor, in a primarily African-American Catholic Church in Norfolk, Va.:

I am grateful this story continues through the lives of those who, like Eleanor, we welcome into this great faith. May they and all who have shared this story come to know the treasure of the Catholic community—its enduring witness to the gospel, its prayer, sacraments, and loving service. These have been, for this glad traveler, the dazzling blessings of belonging.

Msgr. Richard M. Liddy is emeritus university professor of Catholic thought and culture at Seton Hall University, South Orange, N.J.



Miracles on the Hardwood
The Hope-and-a-Prayer Story of a Winning Tradition in College Basketball
By John Gasaway
Twelve
336p \$28

Catholic hoops through history

N.C.A.A. hoops fans often link Catholic colleges with basketball excellence. In *Miracles on the Hardwood*, John Gasaway investigates why. "If there were no game of basketball, Catholic colleges and universities would have been deprived of one of their defining characteristics in the public imagination," Gasaway writes.

Gasaway examines the entire history of Catholic college basketball through Villanova's third men's national championship title in 2018. At times he whips through the years as quickly as Loyola Marymount moved the ball up the court during its record-breaking 122-points-per-game season in 1990. We see just how many different teams, coaches and athletes have contributed to this reputation for basketball excellence, from the University of San Francisco to Georgetown, Gonzaga and Villanova.

"Basketball was invented to save Protestant men's souls," Gasaway writes. When James Naismith, a Presbyterian, developed basketball in 1891, he agreed with the Y.M.C.A. vision of evangelization through sports. In the early 1900s, when Catholic colleges were losing students to secular universities, Jesuit institutions updated their *Ratio Studiorum*, the standard curriculum at

Jesuit schools, by allowing students to declare a major and take a wider variety of classes—and many of them added basketball teams.

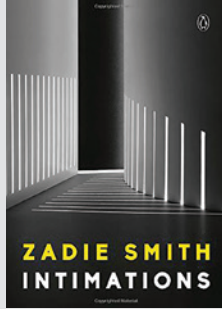
Catholic intercollegiate athletics burgeoned, and the church soon began seeing sports as a way to enhance young men's moral formation. In 1932, Gasaway writes, George Cardinal Mundelein of Chicago praised sports for "rescuing our boys from speakeasies, gangster hang-outs, street corners, and from the other temptations that lie in wait for discontented youth."

Gasaway demonstrates how as basketball developed, Catholic basketball teams often leaped ahead of their competition when they embraced innovations: players confering with coaches during timeouts, jump shots, shot clocks, slam dunks and three-pointers.

By far the most important change was the racial integration of the game. Catholic programs have often been credited with playing a praiseworthy role in integration efforts, Gasaway notes, a "credit that nevertheless acknowledges that the coaches in question were interested primarily in winning games."

Through his minute analysis, Gasaway documents how each Catholic college team that achieved greatness did so through its own unique mix of talent, strategy and luck. But he notes, "even when wins are plentiful, Catholic teams can speak in the familiar language of the underdog."

Jenny Shank's work has appeared in *The Atlantic*, *The Guardian*, *The Washington Post* and *Image*.



Intimations
By Zadie Smith
Penguin Books
112p \$10.95

Talking to yourself

This past spring, a mask became a sign of neighborly care—the signal of a fellow citizen abiding by the social compact of concern for the common good. It also, ironically, became an artifice that allowed me to persist in a private idiosyncrasy in public. Masks, I discovered, mean no one can see you talking to yourself.

Talking to myself is a habit I unintentionally cultivated as a child, chattering out stories while tramping solo through my backyard woods. It is a quirk I have tried unsuccessfully to kick now that I live in a city where there are very few solitary woodland paths on which to wander and yammer out loud to my heart's content. Instead of trees, I move among strangers who are—rightfully—wary of anyone marching down the sidewalk engaged in animated conversation with the air.

In a city, someone vigorously talking to him or herself is usually a sign that the person has, in some way, broken with reality. A city-dweller is quite justified to take a step away.

"Talking to yourself can be useful," objects Zadie Smith at the beginning of *Intimations*, an affirmation I took to heart. "And writing means being overheard."

Smith's six essays in *Intimations* are both monologue and dialogue,

inspired by her re-reading of Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations* during the fraught early months of 2020.

March slowly brought the realization that vectors of the unpredictable were all around us and we couldn't escape them, even if we stayed six feet away. As many New Yorkers grasped at exits, Smith reached for Marcus Aurelius's dialogue with himself in order to dialogue with herself. How many of us, quarantined with our own uninterrupted thoughts, would have welcomed an interlocutor—a philosopher, sure, or simply another voice besides our own?

Smith's gentle, poignant writing provides a voice through which readers can revisit a year filled with eerie peace and dread. Eavesdropping on her internal monologue in *Intimations* provides us an opportunity to dialogue with our own experience of 2020. Each topic Smith tackles— a Trump press conference, America's mercenary outlook on death, or the civil rights movement exploding in the wake of George Floyd's murder—she illuminates.

My grandmother sent me a copy of Smith's book last October. I read it with my morning prayer and coffee on my favorite park bench. As I sat on the bench where I have spent nearly every morning of the past year, Smith's internal dialogue became a bridge of shared conversation with my grandmother. Perhaps to be overheard talking to oneself is not such a bad thing after all.

Renée Darline Roden is a graduate student in journalism and religion at Columbia University, New York City.

Challenges and Confrontations

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT (B), MARCH 7, 2021
 READINGS: EX 20:1-17; PS 19; 1 COR 1:22-25; JN 2:13-25

Today's readings remind us of the struggles and commitments that help us to grow closer to God. They offer us an opportunity to reflect on the expectations for membership in a faith community.

In the first reading, we hear the Ten Commandments given to Moses to proclaim to the Israelites. After the Exodus from Egypt, the people assembled at the base of Mount Sinai, and Moses ascended to receive laws for them to follow in their promised land. The laws offer a window into ancient Israelite ideals for proper worship and interaction within a community. The laws are reminders of requirements that come with membership in a community of faith.

The second reading, similarly, highlights the challenges of living in a society with diverse viewpoints. Paul writes to a community in Corinth, and he notes that these early Christians live in the midst of Jews and Greeks who might criticize their faith in Christ's death and resurrection. Yet he encourages the community to maintain faith and confidence in divine power and

wisdom. Paul leaves room for inclusion of Jews and Gentiles alike if they recognize Christ's significance.

In the Gospel, we hear the story of Jesus expelling the merchants from the temple, condemning commerce within the temple court. While their presence was likely not a violation, Jesus is angered by the buying and selling of animals, proclaiming, "Stop making my father's house a marketplace." On its face, the issue appears as a critique against business transactions on sacred ground. However, the incident probably serves a more symbolic purpose.

Jesus drives out the merchants and animals that were to be sacrificed at Passover, the commemoration of God's saving power before and during the Exodus from Egypt. Jesus' act dramatically reveals that Passover sacrifices will no longer be necessary. By the end of his ministry, Jesus becomes the ultimate Passover (paschal) lamb. At the end of John's Gospel, Jesus' crucifixion happens on Passover. At the beginning of the Gospel, John the Baptist had proclaimed,

'Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up.' (Jn 2:18)

Praying With Scripture

How is Lent helping you to prepare to celebrate the paschal mystery?

Are you able to connect with a community to help you along your Lenten journey?

What are the most important requirements for people of faith?

"Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn 1:29). By expelling the animals and merchants, Jesus visually confirms that they are no longer needed because he will be the paschal lamb who will die and rise from the dead.

As we prepare ourselves to celebrate Jesus' passion, death and resurrection, we should acknowledge the struggles and requirements that come with faith. Likewise, we should continue to pray and reflect on the significance of the paschal mystery.

Exposing Truth

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT (B), MARCH 14, 2021
 READINGS: 2 CHR 36:14-23; PS 137; EPH 2:4-10; JN 3:14-21

This year has been tumultuous already, and we are just in the first quarter. The events of the past few months, unfortunately, have revealed that many people are happy living in darkness, devoid of truth, love and justice. Today's Gospel calls us to embrace truth.

In a passage unique to John's Gos-

pel, today we hear of an encounter between Jesus and the pharisee Nicodemus. The two discuss faith, miracles, the power of the Spirit and Jesus' significance. Notably, Jesus explains that his incarnation is a sign of divine love, and faith in him leads to everlasting life: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone

who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life." This important declaration links the feasts of Christmas and Easter.

The Third Sunday of Advent is Gaudete ("rejoice") Sunday, and today, the Fourth Sunday of Lent, is Laetare ("rejoice") Sunday. As in Advent, in the middle of Lent, we are remind-

ed to rejoice in the incarnation and the passion, death and resurrection of Christ, as these acts reveal God's love.

Yet on this Sunday of joy, the Gospel also exposes us to the sad realities of both the ancient and modern world. Many people simply refuse to accept truth, preferring darkness over light as a place in which to do evil. John often uses light and darkness to represent those who accept and reject Jesus. The light motif first appears when John introduces Jesus as the light that shines through darkness (Jn 1:4-5, 9). When Jesus informs Nicodemus of his role in the world, he also acknowledg-

es the ignorance and wickedness in its midst. Not only do people in darkness reject Jesus; they loathe truth.

We have witnessed what happens when power is given to people who are averse to truth. Distorted realities and corruption persist, not only in government but in the minds and hearts of loyal followers. As we try to recover from years of lies and their effects, we must all come to grips with reality. Acts of hate and continued division are dark and evil, and people who truly want to embrace the light of Christ must also embrace truth.

For everyone who does wicked things hates the light.' (Jn 3:19)

Praying With Scripture

What can you do to promote truth in your community?

How do you discern truth from falsehoods?

How do you maintain hope during tumultuous times?

God's Relationships

FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT (B), MARCH 21, 2021
READINGS: JER 31:31-34; PS 51; HEB 5:7-9; JN 12:20-33

On the First Sunday of Lent, we heard of the very broad Noahic covenant that articulates God's special relationship with all living creatures. As we near the end of Lent, today we hear of a more intimate covenant described in the Book of Jeremiah, the covenant written on the heart. The first reading reminds us of the personal nature of one's relationship with God, an idea that is also echoed in today's Gospel.

In the first reading, Jeremiah speaks about a new relationship that will be instituted between God and the people of Israel and Judah. The context is the invasion and destruction of Judah and deportations during the Babylonian exile. While many people experienced suffering, Jeremiah wrote of hope in the future. He acknowledges the failures of the past, when ancestors did not fully com-

mit to their relationship with God. Using a powerful image, Jeremiah describes God engraving the law on each individual's heart: "I will place my law within them and write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." In Hebrew, the word for heart (*leb*) refers not only to the bodily organ but also to the mind. The heart was thought to be the location of rational thinking and consciousness, similar to the way we think of the brain. When God writes the law on each heart, God instills the requirements deep within the intellectual center so that people can more fully understand the law's intent, to foster good relationships with God and one another.

In the Gospel, Jesus connects with some of his followers, preparing them for his imminent death. First,

we hear of Greeks who wished to meet with Jesus, perhaps showing the broad appeal of Jesus and the future Christian movement to gentiles. When Jesus' disciples tell him of this potential meeting, he responds by alluding to his impending death. Similar to the first reading, Jesus speaks about suffering and future hope. Jesus foreshadows that he and his followers will suffer, but he reminds them that in order to connect with the Father in heaven, they must serve and follow him.

As Jesus continues speaking with his disciples, he reveals his intimate connection with the Father and the reason for his death. We hear Jesus' very human concerns about dying, dreading his own suffering and affirming, "I am troubled now" (literally, "My soul is stirred up"). Unlike the Synoptic Gospels, John does not include a

narrative of the agony in the garden, in which Jesus prays for his cup, i.e., his suffering and death, to pass from him (see Mt 26:39, Mk 14:36, Lk 22:42). In today's Gospel, John depicts Jesus' nervousness over his death, although he quickly reminds himself that he cannot be relieved of this task.

Jesus speaks with the Father in heaven, and the people cannot fully comprehend it, interpreting the voice as thunder or an angel. Instead, Jesus affirms that the voice from heaven is the Father speaking directly to his followers, affirming that by his death

Jesus glorifies the Father. Moreover, Jesus proclaims that his death, resurrection and ascension “draw everyone to myself.”

As we enter the final weeks of Lent, today's readings remind us to reflect intentionally on our relationship with God, calling for prayer, introspection and thanksgiving for God's salvation. Jeremiah calls us to recognize God's close connection and interest in all of us, and John inspires us to connect with God through the mystery of Christ's resurrection.

'I will place my law within them and write it upon their hearts.' (Jer 31:33)

Praying With Scripture

What can you do to foster your relationship with God?

Has Lent been a period of prayer and reflection?

How do you cope with suffering?

Faithful Service

PALM SUNDAY OF THE LORD'S PASSION (B), MARCH 28, 2021

READINGS: MK 11:1-10 OR JN 12:12-16; IS 50:4-7; PS 22; PHIL 2:6-11; MK 14:1-15:47

During Holy Week, we reflect on Jesus' final days. The readings and celebrations will be filled with emotion, both sadness at Jesus' suffering and joy at the resurrection. The readings for Palm Sunday are robust, including two Gospels, one describing Jesus' entry into Jerusalem and another recounting events surrounding Jesus' crucifixion and death. The Gospels call us to reflect on Jesus' sacrifice, highlighting several notable supporters who offered service along the way.

Several groups and individuals are helpful to reflect on this week: the crowds who usher Jesus into Jerusalem, the woman who anoints Jesus, the centurion who proclaims Jesus' divinity, the women who witness the crucifixion and Joseph of Arimathea, who takes Jesus' body.

The Gospel proclaimed at the beginning of Mass will come from either

Mark or John, and it describes the scattering of leafy palm branches on Jesus' path, which is celebrated today on Palm Sunday. The people spreading palms and cloaks offer a triumphant entry for Jesus, confirming the importance of his arrival. They shout “Hosanna,” meaning “Save us,” signaling that Jesus' work in Jerusalem is for salvation.

In his final days, Jesus is anointed by a woman at Bethany. She uses expensive perfumed oil, anointing Jesus' head even when scolded by some who thought her action was wasteful.

Not only does she minister to Jesus, but the woman's action anticipates his death and burial. Importantly, she visually declares Jesus as the Christ, which literally means the anointed one. Jesus praises her for her kindness and service to him, calling for her action to be remembered.

After Judas's betrayal, Jesus is

arrested and crucified. According to Mark, he is beaten, mocked and crowned with thorns before his crucifixion, suffering physical and emotional trauma on the way to death. When Jesus is finally crucified, Mark poignantly depicts the earth in mourning, as darkness fills the land. After Jesus breathes his last breath on the cross, the Roman centurion proclaims, “Truly this man was the Son of God!”

The centurion's declaration is carefully timed in the larger context of the Gospel. On multiple occasions in Mark, Jesus has tried to keep his identity a secret, and up until this moment, no person in the Gospel had acclaimed Jesus as the Son of God. At Jesus' baptism, the Father in heaven declared Jesus as God's Son (Mk 1:11), and during an exorcism an unclean spirit shouts that Jesus is the Son of God (Mk 3:11). Jesus quickly rebukes the spirit, not wanting his identity known at that

time. Finally, in death, this theological assertion is revealed, suggesting that Jesus as the Son of God dying on the cross is the ultimate example of God's love for humanity. Beautifully, after much suspense, Mark has the climactic revelation proclaimed by a gentile from outside of the community, articulating Jesus' death on the cross as salvation for all.

While many of the onlookers were antagonistic to Jesus, Mary Magdalene, Salome, Mary the mother of James and Joses and other women stayed with Jesus, faithfully supporting him when others fled. They are witnesses to salvation, and Mark emphasizes their devotion at the cross and throughout Jesus' journey.

At the end of the Gospel, a council member from Arimathea named Joseph approaches Pilate to receive Jesus' body. Little is known of him,

although Matthew and John say that Joseph was a disciple. Joseph offers a tomb for Jesus' body, showing generosity and care for a proper burial.

During this final week of Lent, think about the magnitude of Jesus' sacrifice and the implications of it as a saving act of divine love. Also, reflect on the people, many of whom were unnamed in the Gospel, who walked with Jesus. These supporters offer us models for how we should live as Christian witnesses. The crowds welcomed Jesus and proclaimed his power and significance. The woman of Bethany tends to Jesus' physical needs before death, and Joseph tends to his body after death. The centurion proclaims Jesus as the divine Son, spreading the Gospel to the community. The named and unnamed women are Christian witnesses who continually support Jesus even in death.

They took palm branches and went out to meet him, and cried out: 'Hosanna!' (Jn 12:13)

Praying With Scripture

What are the implications of faith in Christ's death and resurrection?

How do you live out a call to serve others?

How will you continue to grow in faith when the season of Lent ends?

Each freely offers service to Christ, and they remind us that faithful service is central to discipleship.

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

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Finding Home

Keeping my place in my parish

By Nichole M. Flores



A few weeks ago, I heard a homily that I didn't like. It started as a reflection on the natural law but eventually veered into an argument that Christians in our society are being persecuted and forced underground. Just days before this Mass, the United States witnessed the inauguration of its second Catholic president, sworn in by the Catholic chief justice, witnessed by the Catholic speaker of the House of Representatives and a cavalcade of Catholic artists and poets. Having lived through the summer of hate in Charlottesville in 2017, I think that it is Muslims, Jews and other religious minorities who are persecuted in this country, not Christians like me.

Five years ago, this homily would have sent me running for the hills, or at least to another parish. In fact, five years ago, a homily did send me running to another parish. It was on Jesus' conversation with the rich young man in Matthew 19, and the pastor decided it was important to preach that poor people can sin, too. The homily was followed by a fundraising appeal.

At that time, I had just defended my dissertation in theological ethics. I still felt the zeal of a newly minted theologian, exacting precision and consistency in discussions with everyone from my graduate students to my greengrocer to my mom. I am positive that this tendency was annoying to all those around me. Even so, I am convicted that Matthew 19 is an indict-

ment of people of wealth and power, not of those who are poor.

Taking advice from Catholic friends, I decided to try another parish down the road. I didn't like that this new parish didn't have kneelers and that the walls of the sanctuary were plain white. But the pastor, deacons and parishioners were warm and welcoming. The preaching felt challenging but familiar. My family became regulars at the Saturday vigil Mass.

Then our pastor was abruptly moved to another parish. The unexpected change left me feeling unmoored in my faith, not sure how to relate to the parish in my grief for the loss.

One Sunday, I decided to attend Mass at the parish I had left. Not much had changed there in four years. But a lot had changed for me. While I used to critique homilies from the comfort of my pew, I now spent at least half the Mass chasing my toddler in the narthex. And hearing the homilies from the perspective of an overwhelmed mother, I started to hear mercy and compassion where I once only heard mistakes. By early 2020, my family had migrated back to our former parish with a renewed hope that, despite any disagreements with pastors or fellow parishioners, we belonged there.

Then came the pandemic. I attended Mass in mid-March and then not again until mid-August. So far, I am the only member of my household

to return and only to sparsely populated weekday Masses. While I lament the absence of my squirming toddler, I can once again listen to homilies with a critical ear.

But maybe because so much has happened in the past five years, a discordant homily does not make me want to run away. My pastor's words a few weeks ago caused me to ponder, discern and pray instead of feeling the urge to assert, fight and win. In these excruciating times, I am acutely aware of my need for Jesus and how much that need exceeds my need to be right.

It is possible for a homily to go beyond objectionable and become abusive. No one should be forced to listen to preaching that undermines the image of God in each one of us. But a decision to leave because of one homily would have meant avoiding the challenging work of building a relationship with a pastor with whom I sometimes disagree but always love. I have a place at my parish even when I disagree with my pastor. I have decided that I am not ceding the church anymore. By virtue of my baptism, I have a place at the table. I am not giving up my pew or my place.

Nichole M. Flores is an assistant professor of religious studies at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Va.

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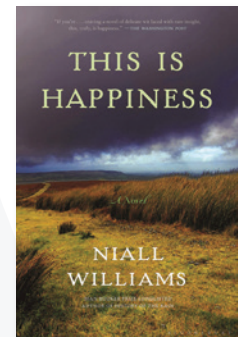
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U.S. Catholics Are Blessing the Poor in Kenya

BY ADDRESSING THEIR URGENT NEED FOR SAFE WATER

Gladys Mghoi is helping to raise her grandchildren in Mokine, a small village situated in the Archdiocese of Mombasa. Every morning, she wakes up at around 4 a.m. to start the long and arduous process of collecting water for the day.

“In Gladys’ simple home, there is no tap to turn to get a supply of water. She lives in an impoverished village, and like most everyone else there, she must travel to a distant source to get the water her family needs,” explained Jim Cavnar, president of Cross Catholic Outreach, a leading relief and development charity assisting Catholic missions in Africa. “It’s tragic, but water scarcity is common in many parts of Kenya. People in remote areas tend to be desperately poor, and their villages have no infrastructure to supply water. To get what they need to survive, they face a lot of hardships.”

In Gladys’ case, quenching the thirst of her grandchildren means a walk of nearly 2 miles to a dry riverbed. There, villagers have dug a hole that allows water to seep up from the ground. It is a slow process, so Gladys and the others who come to the spot often have to wait in line more than an hour to fill their containers with muddy water from the pit.

The walk home with this “reward” is also a challenge because the jerrycan she uses can become very heavy when it is full.

Because of Gladys’ age and health, her older grandchildren usually assist with this exhausting process. When they do, it disadvantages the family again. Water collection often takes so long the children either arrive late to class or miss school altogether.

According to Cavnar, solving the water scarcity problem is a priority for Cross Catholic Outreach because a lack of clean water has a negative impact in so many areas of a poor family’s life.

“One of our biggest concerns is the poor quality of the water they currently collect,” he said. “The muddy stuff is often tainted with bacteria, parasites and the chemical runoff from local farms.”

Gladys is aware of this threat too, but since there is no alternative, she sees no other way to proceed.

“We collect water which is very, very dirty, and then it will become very difficult for us and very unhealthy for our consumption,” Gladys admitted. “This water is very dirty. It is very murky. At the same time, because we have no option, we have to drink it the way it is.”

As bleak as this situation may seem,



Gladys Mghoi and her grandchildren face tremendous challenges obtaining their daily water supply. They currently walk far to collect contaminated water — because they have no other option. With the help of the Church, this hardship can end.

Gladys and her neighbors have a reason to feel hopeful. A local priest has become aware of the village’s hardships and is working to provide relief through a partnership with Cross Catholic Outreach. [See story on opposite page.] If this project is successful, the challenges she faces in collecting water may soon be over.

“Our goal now is to get the financial backing of U.S. Catholics to fund this special project,” Cavnar said. “If they respond generously, and I believe they will, we can ensure Gladys and her grandchildren have safe water to drink for many years to come.”

Addressing specific needs like this is what Cross Catholic Outreach was founded to accomplish. For nearly 20 years, the Catholic ministry has partnered with a local Catholic priest, religious sisters or missions to solve the problems of the poor.

“U.S. Catholics have been very interested in helping the poor using our approach because they like funding specific needs and supporting the local Catholic clergy,” Cavnar said. “They want their donated dollars to have a profound and lasting impact, so water projects are the kind of outreach they like best. Providing safe water addresses many needs — from quenching thirst to restoring health to supporting educational goals. In this case, it will also bring long-awaited relief to precious people like Gladys.”

The grandmother confirmed that fact as

she explained yet another reason she sees the proposed water project as a blessing.

“It is not very safe for me to collect water as an elderly person, but since there is no alternative, we have to risk our lives,” Gladys explained. “Sometimes because of my weakness, I can fall down. Sometimes there are also wild animals [such as] hyenas in the area.”

These risks will also be eliminated when the water project is completed.

“I can’t imagine the joy Gladys will feel when that tap is installed and the clean water flows freely. But I do know one thing — she and the others in her community will praise God,” Cavnar said. “And what a joy it will be for us too. There’s nothing more gratifying than serving as instruments of God’s mercy!”

HOW TO HELP

To fund Cross Catholic Outreach’s effort to help the poor worldwide, use the postage-paid brochure inserted in this newspaper or mail your gift to Cross Catholic Outreach, Dept. AC01603, PO Box 97168, Washington DC 20090-7168. The brochure also includes instructions on becoming a Mission Partner and making a regular monthly donation to this cause.

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