

America

MAY 14, 2018

THE MONTHLY REVIEW OF FAITH AND CULTURE

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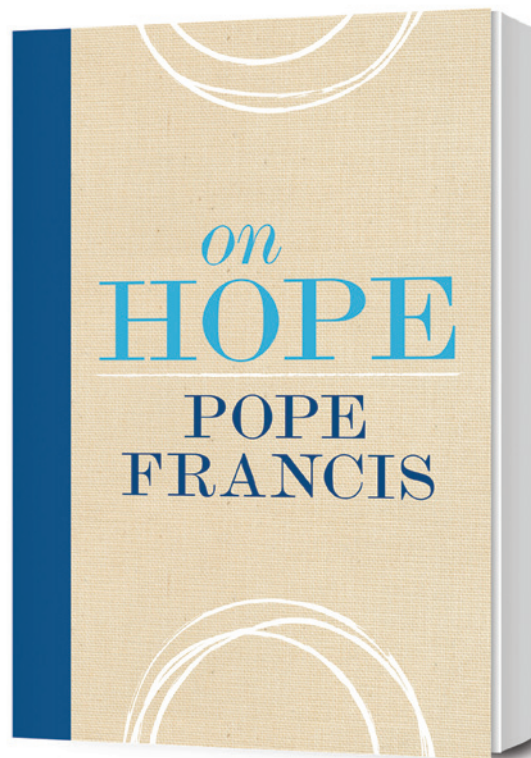
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A JESUIT MINISTRY

Thank You, Senator

In mid-April Mark Zuckerberg, the founder and chief executive officer of Facebook, made a much-anticipated appearance on Capitol Hill, where he was questioned by members of Congress for more than 10 hours about the company's improper handling of the personal data of Facebook users. Throughout the nationally televised inquisition, reported *The Washington Post*, both Democrats and Republicans "took turns swiping at Zuckerberg, holding him to 'yes' and 'no' questions and frequently cutting him off."

Yet Mr. Zuckerberg largely kept his cool and displayed a sense of decorum that seemed almost anachronistic. Several commentators, in fact, said that Mr. Zuckerberg might have been too polite, or at least excessively deferential, because he prefaced every response with "Senator" or "Congressman." Heather Schwedel of *Slate* wrote that "Zuckerberg sounded like he was overdoing it, at times coming off as not just a try-hard but pedantic too." I did not hear it that way. His sense of decorum was a welcome respite from the freewheeling, indecorous rhetoric that passes for our public discourse.

Mr. Zuckerberg's appearance certainly stands in sharp contrast with the squeamishly inappropriate performance of Michelle Wolf, the comedian who was center stage at this year's annual dinner hosted by the White House Correspondents' Association. There is a difference between funny and mean, which Ms. Wolf struggled to discern. While allowing for the fact that Mr. Zuckerberg and Ms. Wolf had different roles at different events, one delivering formal testimony, the other playing the part of court jester, Ms. Wolf's performance by contrast showed just how

coarsen the contemporary political discourse can be. That is not entirely her fault, of course. As the conservative commentator William Kristol observed, while "the half hour performance of Michelle Wolf was vulgar, unseemly and damaging to our civic discourse," the entire "three-year performance of candidate and president Donald Trump has been vulgar, unseemly and infinitely more damaging to our civic discourse."

That much is true, but the lack of decorum in our public affairs is not entirely the fault of President Trump either. For years now, Americans have been jettisoning the formal, social customs that have traditionally governed our public interactions, tossing overboard the social niceties that were once thought to be essential to the smooth sailing of the ship of state. Our bemusement at Mr. Zuckerberg's use of traditional honorifics and courtesy titles is evidence of this. And as with so much else, the justification for breaking down these social "barriers" is some seemingly egalitarian notion of inclusion.

Yet abandoning such social customs tends to benefit elites by reinforcing social barriers rather than removing them. I am loath, for example, to address people by their first name unless they have invited me to do so, or we have a familiar relationship that makes it acceptable to do so. In much of everyday life, however, we have done away with such formalities. And it is people in positions of power who have benefitted. Now, upon being introduced to Agnes Murphy of Ottumwa, Iowa, housewife and grandmother, most of us would feel perfectly entitled to call her Agnes from the get-go. But what about our doctors or the local judge? And if we met Pope Francis for the first time, would we think it was

appropriate to address him as Jorge? If we met the president of the French Republic, would we think it was acceptable to call him Emmanuel? Certainly not. Most of us would probably address him as Mr. President, yet he would probably feel free to call us by our first names. This is levelling the playing field?

One could argue that we should use honorifics and courtesy titles in one case and not the other out of respect for the office the person occupies, rather than the person per se. Yet that is precisely my point: Basic social customs, including how we address each other, should account for what we owe each other as human beings, not what we think we owe someone by virtue of the power he or she possesses. Forms of address can change depending on the office someone inhabits, but the fundamental respect we owe each other, which is reflected in these formalities, does not change. It is not a coincidence, moreover, that our discourse became more coarsened just at the moment we collectively abandoned these formal social customs.

All of this is to say that **America** will continue to use honorifics and courtesy titles, whether it is "Mr. Trump," "Mrs. Clinton" or "Sr. Margaret, a nun from Albany." It does mean that our prose is occasionally cumbersome and that our authors sometimes have fewer words with which to work. But such formalities personalize the discourse in the only way that ultimately matters, by signaling the basic respect we owe people simply because they are persons. To put it another way: I think Mrs. Murphy of Ottumwa, Iowa, is owed the same mark of respect as the highest-ranking president or prelate. Even more, perhaps, but at least that much.

—
Matt Malone, S.J. *Twitter: @americacditor.*



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Armando Ricart Batista, a former boxer and actor, Havana, Cuba, April 12. Mr. Batista said he hopes a new generation of Cuban leaders will follow the ideals of the Castros.

Cover Image: CNS/Stock composite

AP Photo/Ramon Espinosa

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A survey of U.S. Catholic women
prompts challenging questions

Catholic Moms: What is your experience of raising your children in the faith?

Over 500 respondents took part in our informal survey on Catholic motherhood, conducted via **America's** email newsletter and social media platforms.

Twenty-five percent told **America** that one or more of their children had left the church, and only 1 percent said that one of their children had entered the priesthood or a religious order.

The quarter of respondents whose children left the church provided some clear reasons for their departure. The sexual abuse crisis, instances of bullying at Catholic schools, disagreement with church teaching and objections to the treatment of L.G.B.T. people by Catholics were all cited by mothers as factors in their children's decision to leave.

Many respondents expressed confusion and a sense of powerlessness in response to their children leaving the church and spoke about the pain of not seeing their grandchildren baptized. "I wish I knew why they left the church," wrote Maria O'Neill of Edgerton, Kan. "But all things

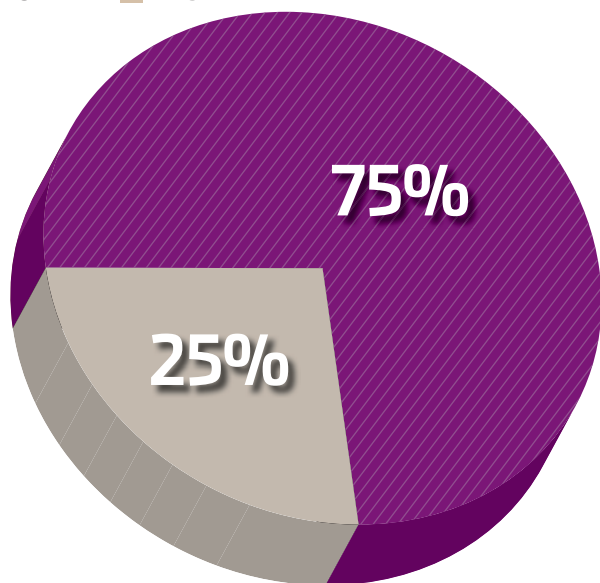
changed when they left home, went to college and in some ways the people they married—even though three out of four spouses are Catholic." Cathy Gwynn of Falmouth, Mass., speculated, "I think they did not find the church relevant."

When asked why they chose to raise their children Catholic, readers described the importance of faith in their own lives. Sophie Byrnes of Streamwood, Ill., wrote: "I was given the gift of Catholic faith, all its traditions and prayers, from my mom, Josephine. At a young age, I understood the beauty of believing in the Lord and asking the saints for intercession in prayers. I wanted to bless my children's lives with faith."

Tina O'Brien from Seattle, explained her reasons for passing on the faith. "We want our children to see the beauty of the Catholic Church—in particular, her social service outreach—and know that they are unconditionally loved."

Have any of your children left the Catholic Church?

■ NO ■ YES



Why did you raise your children in the Catholic faith?

"I made a promise to God when my children were baptized that I would raise them in the faith. My vocation as their mother is to do my best to keep them close to Christ, so they may return to him."

—Trisha Dela Vega, Newark, Calif.

"I want my son to know God's love through relationships built in community. Duncan has autism, and church is a place he can be just like everyone else."

—Jane Cruthirds, Louisville, Ky.

"My husband and I see raising children in the faith as an important part of the sacrament of marriage. We were also both raised Catholic and went to Catholic schools—it is a main part of our identity, and we want it to be that way for our children."

—Sarah Yecke, Toledo, Ohio

These results are based on reader responses to a poll promoted on Facebook, Twitter and in our email newsletter.

Mea Culpa

Re “Asking the Right Question,” by Matt Malone, S.J. (Of Many Things, 4/30): Father Malone writes: “The question is ‘Who is the cause of polarization?’ And the answer is: You are.... And I am. Together, we are the causes of polarization.” I agree. What I found to be a real eye-opener were some of the posts of both extremely liberal and extremely conservative Facebook friends. To see the hatred and vitriol and sarcasm and put-downs, coming from each side directed toward the other, made me examine if I had ever posted or liked a snappy meme or put-down. And *mea culpa*, I realized I had. So I am trying—and *trying* is the key word—to maintain the integrity of my beliefs without putting down those who think differently. If I slip and fail, I hope someone points it out to me.

Monica Quigley Doyle 🗨️

A Sad Time

Re “Miscarriages Are Happening in I.C.E. Custody. Will the Pro-Life Movement Respond?” (Our Take, 4/30): Being pro-life means a lot more than being anti-abortion. This is my core issue with many who support anti-abortion policies but perpetuate and support policies that also disrespect the right to life in other capacities. I think it is a sad time for Catholics and Christians.

Lauren Wright 🗨️

Ashamed

It would be reasonable to suppose that the stress of being detained contributes to miscarriage. In any case, detention cannot be good for either mother or child. I am ashamed of our country and the people who support this administration.

Lisa Weber 🗨️

What is Needed?

Re “I Joined the Jesuit Volunteer Elder Corps at 68—and Never Looked Back,” by Helen Donnelly Goehring (4/30): Thanks for sharing this, Helen. I loved reading about your experience, and it has inspired me to look around and truly see where I might be needed in my own neighborhood.

Faye Coopender 🗨️

Sleeping Consciences

Re “A Life in Full,” by Anna Keating (4/30): The main part of this article is Ms. Keating telling the story of how she had walked with a Cystic Fibrosis patient through her childhood and observed how her parents responded. Now, it probably challenges the conscience of Americans in a way they may find uncomfortable. Good. A look at the headlines tells us we need to be challenged. And, as Father Malone noted in *Of Many Things*, it is all of us who need to be challenged, not just those people “over there.” The point of this article was not to outline specific outreach ministries but to wake up our sleeping consciences.

I am the father of a teenage C.F. patient. I would appreciate and would have appreciated more practical help and personal support. But I also will appreciate a culture and, yes, laws, that affirm unequivocally that my daughter’s life is worth living. I am thankful for Ms. Keating’s witness here and to **America** for publishing it.

John McGuinness 🗨️

Defending His Own

Re “An Archbishop Fit for a Scorsese Film,” by Anthony D. Andreassi, C.O. (4/30): Dagger John took no prisoners when it came to defending his own, and this biography is a welcome addition to the lexicon about this important figure in U.S. Catholic history. If only there were more like him today, ready to defend our own and all others threatened by the swarming privileged who see the immigrant and the different as unworthy of belonging in our culture. John Hughes’s defense of the rights of Catholics in the United States of the mid-19th century stands as a shining example of faith in action.

Barry Fitzpatrick 🗨️

Springsteen in My Heart

Re “The Enduring Catholic Imagination of Bruce Springsteen,” by Brian P. Conniff (4/30): This article recalls memories of when I, at age 19, spent a semester in Rome in 1979 with the University of Dallas at the beginning of the pontificate of St. John Paul II, traveling up and down Italy on the trains with Springsteen throbbing in my heart: “I ain’t a boy/ No, I’m a man/ And I believe in the Promised Land.”

Carl Kuss 🗨️

🗨️ Comments drawn from our website, americamagazine.org, and America Media’s social media platforms.

Letters to the editor can be sent to letters@americamedia.org. Please include the article title, author and issue date, as well as your name and where you are writing from.

Ireland's Fight for Life

In a political development that would have been unimaginable two decades ago, the voters of the Republic of Ireland will go to the polls on May 25 to decide whether to repeal the Eighth Amendment of their Constitution, which recognizes an equal right to life for both a mother and her unborn child. In place since 1983, the amendment acts as a de facto ban on abortion, making Ireland an outlier among its European Union peers, almost all of whom have legalized abortion up to the 12th week of a woman's pregnancy. If the hotly contested referendum passes, it will pave the way for similar legislation in Ireland.

The referendum, say many of its supporters, is simply a matter of protecting women's health, not a question of repudiating Ireland's Catholic past or rejecting its traditional culture. That Irish women already enjoy some of the world's highest levels of maternal health is blithely sidestepped by referendum supporters, including Ireland's Taoiseach (prime minister), Leo Varadkar. Mr. Varadkar's government has made it clear that if Ireland passes the referendum, it

will introduce legislation granting the unrestricted right to abortion during the first 12 weeks of pregnancy. Supporters of the Eighth Amendment, however, have voiced concerns that such a policy will be written in such vague terms and include so many exceptions that it will allow an abortion throughout a woman's pregnancy.

The United States can offer this nation's own grim legacy on abortion as an ominous warning to the Irish people. When the U.S. Supreme Court struck down restrictions on abortion in *Roe v. Wade* in 1973, the decision preserved a ban on abortions after the point of fetal viability. But in another decision that same day (*Doe v. Bolton*), the justices construed the exemptions for a mother's health in abortion legislation so broadly that abortion became available on demand at almost any point in a woman's pregnancy. It is important to note that almost no one in 1973 was campaigning for abortion on demand; in fact, most of the nation would have been aghast at the suggestion. Forty-five years after those court decisions, U.S. federal abortion laws re-

main some of the world's most permissive, and the country now approaches a grisly milestone of 55 million children aborted since 1973.

In Ireland, one might suspect that on a sociopolitical level this referendum is further evidence of a longer-term reaction against the Catholic Church, whose decline in authority and influence in Ireland has been paralleled by referendums in 1995 that legalized divorce and in 2015 that legalized same-sex marriage. If so, there will be no small irony involved: that the Catholic Church's support for the Eighth Amendment will hurt the amendment's chances in Ireland.

The past and the future of Ireland alike cry out to its present voters for greater imagination than that. The Eighth Amendment is not a remnant of what made Ireland backward; nor is the callous disregard for unborn life that would be signified by its repeal a necessary component of a modern Irish society. Rather, a no on the referendum would be quintessentially Irish: a reminder that she always looked to her children, to the future.

Native Americans Deserve Tribal Recognition

Since the first treaties between the United States and indigenous tribes were signed during the Revolutionary War, U.S. law has recognized Native American nations as sovereign governments. The fact that treaties with Native American peoples have been broken repeatedly does not change the fact that the governments of Native American tribes have been recognized as

distinct legal entities, entitled to certain rights and protections not afforded other U.S. citizens. Among those rights and protections has been the guarantee of health care, provided by the Indian Health Service, based in historic recognition of the government-to-government obligations owed by the federal government to Native American tribes.

This arrangement is now under

threat because of the refusal by the Trump administration's Department of Health and Human Services to grant Native American tribes' request for exemption from new state laws implementing work requirements for Medicaid. The core of the administration's reasoning is that Native Americans constitute a "racial category" and that granting exemption would constitute

racial discrimination (presumably against others). In refusing the exemption, the administration shows a lack of respect for the sovereignty of Native American nations and once again breaks the spirit of the treaties. Considering the ethnic cleansing and social marginalization native peoples have experienced in U.S. history, the status quo is already deeply unjust.

Unemployment on Native American reservations is far above the national average, just one of many symptoms of entrenched racial and economic inequality facing Native Americans. Implementing a work requirement for access to Medicaid will disproportionately hurt those in areas already suffering from lack of economic opportunity. Any reduction in Medicaid funds among Native American tribes could cripple the Indian Health Service. And as the Republican-held Congress eyes further welfare reform and pushes a farm bill that cuts SNAP benefits (commonly known as food stamps), the precedent of treating Native Americans simply as a racial category means this most marginalized of groups in the country is likely to go without critically needed aid.

It goes without saying this is not the way to ask forgiveness from native peoples and achieve reconciliation with them. The Trump administration should reverse course and continue to recognize the unique tribal sovereignty of Native American people and work with tribal governments to determine how best to tackle the severe economic, social and public health challenges facing Native Americans.

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Why Catholics should care about Bears Ears

The Trump administration's attempt to reduce the size of two national monuments in Utah by millions of acres has been almost lost amid other news from Washington. President Trump wants to shrink Bears Ears National Monument, a collection of red rock canyons including sites considered sacred by Native Americans, by 85 percent, and another monument, Grand Staircase-Escalante, by about half (leaving them at about 220,000 and one million acres, respectively). This decision, now facing a number of legal challenges, is part of a larger change in the direction of the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of the Interior. The Trump administration has been deregulating mineral and gas extraction and cutting budgets for federal conservation efforts, and it is undertaking the largest reduction in federally protected lands in U.S. history. For Catholics, these are matters of great concern.

There is a sense among too many Christians that this passing world and the "lower parts of creation" are insignificant, or that God's grant to Adam of dominion over nature was a grant of exploitation. But concern for the environment was not introduced by Pope Francis. It is the church's consistent teaching, and Francis' predecessors also wrote with passion about the need to conserve our natural inheritance. St. John Paul II said that Christianity never rejects nature but seeks God in it. In becoming the bread of life, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI would add, God united himself to our earth in order to bring all of creation to redemption and divinization.

As the writer and farmer Wendell Berry has put it, since the things of

nature exist with God's presence in them, "we and all other creatures live by a sanctity that is inexpressibly intimate." The idea that, as St. Paul says, "the things of God are clearly seen in creation," is another reason for Christians to care about what happens to our parks and nature preserves.

Pope Francis has noted that for many people the beauty of nature is the starting place for an encounter with God. Today, when other occasions for such an encounter may be harder to find, the "still, small voice" can still be heard in quiet woods and on mountain heights. John Muir, the great American naturalist, had it right when he wrote that "every man needs beauty as well as bread, places to play in and to pray in, where nature may heal and give strength to body and soul alike." In addition to being a place of encounter with God, these lands are places for encounter with one another, family and neighbors.

Setting aside certain stretches of land as above the use of the market, as outside the realm of profit and gain, is a sign that our nation still believes in the idea of sacredness. The church is always obliged to defend useless things, or things that appear useless to society. This is why it seeks to defend the poor, the severely disabled, those with intellectual impairments, the unborn and the sick. Catholics believe that things can have value apart from their usefulness to us—things can have value simply in virtue of being made by God and being a present object of divine delight. Preserving these wilderness areas is a reminder to ourselves, and a statement to our community, that we have not given in to the world of mere appetites, of get-

ting and spending, but still hold on to this idea of the sacred.

"I like big things," Theodore Roosevelt said in a speech in 1886 in Dakota Territory. "Big forests and mountains... big factories, steamboats, everything else." But if we have all the big things in the world and it makes us corrupt, greedy and vain, he went on, then none of it matters. Roosevelt thought it was legitimate to use the land for drilling, mining and logging, but he also saw that these activities must have limits. Economic activity cannot come at the cost of permanently damaging the health of the land that we share with our neighbors and that our descendants rely on us to keep whole.

As Pope Francis has pointed out, the most wasteful forms of industry disproportionately harm the poorest of the world. A Catholic ought to respond to the policies of the current administration by saying that our land—this land that is a gift and expression of God's love—is worth preserving.

St. John Paul II, as a part of his effort to call the faithful to an "ecological conversion," proclaimed St. Francis of Assisi the patron of those who work for the conservation of the environment. An American Catholic might take Servant of God Nicholas Black Elk as another who could remind us, as Francis did, of our brotherhood with all people and all creation, and encourage us to take to heart the words of Benedict XVI: "Protecting the natural environment in order to build a world of peace is a duty incumbent upon each and all."

*Nathan Beacom writes from Des Moines, Iowa. His writing has previously appeared in *The Public Discourse* and *The Des Moines Register*.*

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Children banned from Mass in China's Henan Province

By Verna Yu

Christian churches in the province with the largest Christian population in China have been ordered by the authorities, amid an escalating crackdown on religious freedom, to bar children from attending services. In recent months children have been expelled from an Easter Mass, church-run kindergartens have been closed, and churches and crosses have been demolished.

According to a widely circulated notice issued by the state-backed Henan provincial Patriotic Catholic Association and Henan provincial Catholic Administration Commission, dated April 8, churches must stop congregants from bringing their children to Mass and cease hosting retreats and training activities for children. Church staff who disobey, it warned, will be stripped of their positions and their churches will be closed.

It also carried a stern warning: “In the past this was mainly a matter of propaganda and education, but now this is the red line, the high-pressure line. Do not disregard this.” The centrally located Province of Henan is estimated to have a Christian population of several million—including roughly 300,000 Catholics.

A Catholic who requested anonymity told Ucanews.com, an independent Catholic news service in Asia, that officials from the religious affairs bureaus in Henan went to the North Church of the Zhengzhou Diocese on Easter Sunday and ordered all the children to leave the Mass. When **America** inquired about the incident by phone on April 24, a staff member at the Huiji Religious Affairs Bureau hung up.

Ucanews.com also reported that a Catholic kinder-

A young girl reads a Bible during Mass in the state-approved Xuanwumen Catholic Church in Beijing in December 2016.

garten in the Anyang Diocese had been raided twice, and afterward its entrance was sealed with welded metal bars. In the dioceses of Shangqiu and Anyang, local officials have been standing at church entrances to block children from entering, the report said.

Two primary schools in Henan issued open letters to parents urging them to keep their children away from religious venues and to refrain from allowing them to participate in religious activities.

“No one may use religion to disrupt social order, harm citizens or impede the national education system,” the letter said, quoting the national Constitution, regulations on religious activities, and laws on education and the protection of children, although none of these directly forbid children from participating in religion.

“Let children stay away from religion,” it said, noting that developing minds were prone to the dangers of “illegal religious activities and religious extremism” and that keeping children out of religious venues was a “guarantee of a bright future.”

Ying Fuk Tsang, the director of the school of divinity at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, said the Communist Party saw the growth of Christianity as a threat to its rule. In official literature, he said, the party often regarded the spread of Christianity or Islam as a “fight over souls” or a “fight over the next generation.”

President Xi Jinping has repeatedly said that national security must be under “the absolute leadership of the Communist Party.” Mr. Xi has said that socialism’s “core values” and Chinese culture should guide religions in China and that people should “safeguard against the infiltration of Western ideology.” The Chinese government sees Christianity, along with foreign N.G.O.’s and human rights activists, as part of a concerted effort by the West to threaten China’s values.

Yang Fenggang, the director of the Center on Religion and Chinese Society at Purdue University, said a combination of “militant atheism” and nationalism is driving the latest crackdown on Christianity. In the past “foreign religions” like Christianity and Islam were dealt with through soft measures like admonishment and education campaigns; under Mr. Xi, the authorities have seen it as imperative to employ heavy-handed tactics to suppress their

growth, Mr. Yang said. The use of the term “red line” in the notice to churches in Henan indicates that churches are now seen as “hostile organizations” that authorities have to use strict punishment to deal with, he said.

The Texas-based nonprofit China Aid has also reported on an intensification of the suppression of Catholic and Protestant Christians across Henan Province since the start of April. A report quoted unnamed Christians as saying that church crosses have been removed “on a large scale,” citing the example of the Jinzhuang Church in the Shangqiu Diocese. Another Henan church, the state-sanctioned Sheng’*en*, or Holy Grace, Church, had its cross removed from its spire on Sept. 20 last year, according to various news reports, and the image of it set on fire caused outrage.

According to the China Aid report, quoting anonymous Christian sources, during mid-April a church in Gongyi city was demolished by the local government, and officials twice raided a Catholic church in Gaoqiangying in Hua County, confiscating religious artifacts. On April 17, local officials closed the Catholic church at Xin village in the Anyang Diocese and removed the cross from its spire. On the same day, the government forcibly removed the cross from a Catholic church in Beishijian, New Jiaozuo District, confiscated children’s Bibles and books and took over the church’s accounts.

America tried to contact the Henan provincial Administration of Religious Affairs to verify these reports and to seek official comments, but a telephone operator said its phone number had been “made confidential.”

Although religious experts believe that Henan’s recent measures were due in part to the arrival of a new provincial Communist Party chief in March and local officials’ eagerness to show their loyalty under President Xi’s tightened ideological control, they predicted there would be further suppression of churches throughout the country.

“I believe it will be a general direction for the Communist Party to cool the ‘religious fever’ and deal with problems such as house churches, Communist Party members, youngsters and university students turning to religion,” said Mr. Ying.

Verna Yu, *Hong Kong correspondent.*

A Mother's Day wish: more children?

The U.S. fertility rate hit another record low in 2016, to 62 births per 1,000 women of childbearing age, leading to fears that eventually there may not be enough taxpayers to keep Social Security afloat.

The picture may not be quite that bleak. The projected number of births over the average woman's lifetime, another way to measure fertility, was 1.77 last year. That is an improvement over a record low 1.74 in 1976, though still below the replacement rate of 2.1 children. But according to survey data, women in the United States want to have an average of 2.7 children per lifetime. And the Pew Research Center recently reported that 86 percent of U.S. women between 40 and 44 had given birth as of 2016, up from 80 percent a decade earlier.

It is possible that the escalating cost of raising a child, especially with the expense of day care and health care, are

discouraging potential parents. There are also repercussions to careers. Most U.S. mothers are in the workforce, and a recent Census Bureau study found that women who have their first child between the ages of 25 and 35 have the toughest time keeping up with the incomes of their spouses.

The birth rate in the United States would be considerably lower if not for immigrants. From 1990 through 2015, total births were down 10 percent among women born in the United States but up 6 percent among foreign-born women. Another difference between the two populations: In 2015, 38 percent of U.S.-born women who gave birth were unmarried. Among foreign-born new mothers, only 25 percent were unmarried.

Robert David Sullivan, *associate editor*. Twitter: @robertdsullivan.

MOTHERHOOD AND CAREERS

62.4% of women 16-50 who gave birth within the past 12 months are in the labor force (2015).

Working women whose first childbirth was between 25 and 35 have the most difficulty keeping up with the income gains of their spouses.

MEDIAN AGE AT FIRST CHILDBIRTH **26**

UP FROM 23 IN 1994



COST OF RAISING A CHILD

\$233,610 FROM BIRTH THROUGH AGE 17
\$12,350-\$13,900 ANNUALLY, DEPENDING ON CHILD'S AGE

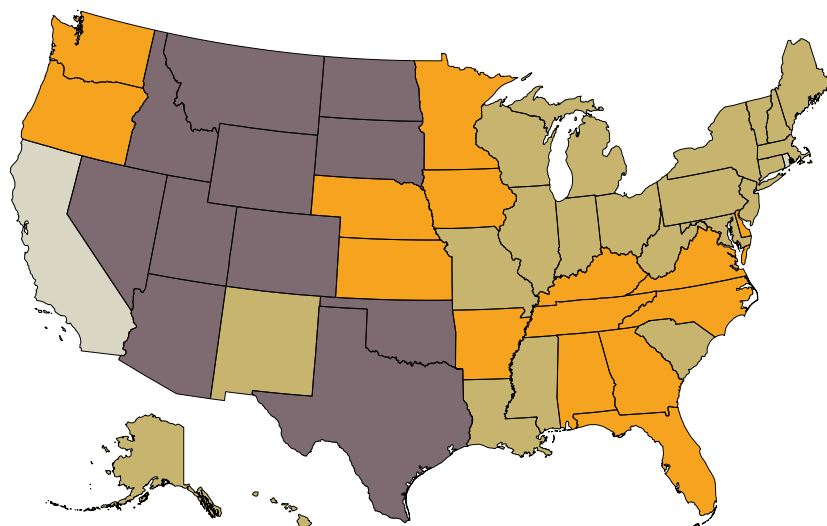
% OF TOTAL COST	1960	2015
HOUSING	31%	29%
FOOD	24%	18%
CHILD CARE/EDUCATION	2%	16%
TRANSPORTATION	16%	15%
HEALTH CARE	4%	9%
CLOTHING	11%	6%

FERTILITY RATE (LIFETIME BIRTHS PER WOMAN)

2007 U.S. fertility rate	2.12
2017 U.S. fertility rate	1.77
Replacement rate	2.10
Number of children desired by women (2015)	2.70

CHANGE IN BIRTHS 1990 - 2015

- Births up overall, and among both U.S.-born and foreign-born women
- Births up overall, but only among foreign-born women
- Births down overall, but still up among foreign-born women
- Births down overall, among both U.S.-born and foreign-born women



FROM 1990 - 2015
TOTAL U.S. BIRTHS
DOWN 4%

AMONG
U.S.-BORN WOMEN
DOWN 10%

AMONG
FOREIGN-BORN WOMEN
UP 6%

Sources: "Facts for Features: Mother's Day 2017," U.S. Census Bureau; "The 10-Year Baby Window That Is the Key to the Women's Pay Gap," New York Times, April 9, 2018; Pew Research Center report on U.S. fertility, Jan. 18, 2018; "Expenditures on Children by Families, 2015," U.S. Department of Agriculture; "American Women Are Having Fewer Children Than They'd Like," New York Times, Feb. 13, 2018; Fact Tank on immigrant births, Pew Research Center, Aug. 29, 2017.

Bishop McElroy: Catholics must fight polarization in politics and the church



Bishop Robert McElroy of San Diego.

Catholic moral teaching are deployed by both sides to explain why one set of these issues automatically enjoys a higher claim upon the consciences of believers.”

Bishop McElroy’s views have been interpreted as being part of the “seamless garment” approach to Catholic social justice teaching, a notion advanced by Cardinal Bernardin in the 1980s. During his talk at Loyola, the bishop said Catholics are called to fight polarization in the political arena by shifting away from ideological battles and toward the Gospel.

What he dubbed a “Catholic political imagination” could guide this political evangelization, which would demand “heartfelt compassion for all those who are suffering in society,” including, he said, those who suffer because of racism, poverty, gun violence, threats of deportation and sexual harassment.

“These are wounds in our society which tear at our social fabric and constitute immense human suffering that must be addressed,” he said. “The central challenge is whether we can meet our woundedness with care and action which are not filtered through a partisan lens.

“The danger in our current political climate is that the people of the United States will come to accept the current political division, nihilism, hypocrisy and anger in our culture as normal,” said Bishop McElroy.

He lamented that the church in the United States is also infected by polarization, saying that “many of those most committed to the work of transforming our nation through the realization of Catholic social teaching are also deeply factionalized.”

“A Catholic political virtue ethic for this moment in our nation’s history must recognize that the need for dialogue, encounter and unity is more important than any single policy issue we face today, because such a stance of encounter and dialogue is itself the foundation for any genuine pursuit of the common good,” he said.

Responding to a question from a Loyola undergraduate student, Bishop McElroy said engaging young Catholics will be especially important for the church in this area. “Unless we can find ways of engaging with the younger generation, it’s going to be a greatly crippled church moving forward,” he said.

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

Catholics have a special duty to resist polarization, both in politics and in the church.

That was the message from Bishop Robert McElroy of the Diocese of San Diego, in a lecture named for the late Cardinal Joseph Bernardin at Loyola University Chicago on April 18.

Bishop McElroy said that Catholics must strive to adopt a new “Catholic political imagination” that embraces “the virtues of solidarity, compassion, integrity, hope and peace-building.”

Using Pope Francis’ address to the U.S. Congress in 2015 as inspiration, Bishop McElroy said Catholics, especially church leaders, must “reassess” how they “carry out the mission of evangelizing the political culture of the United States” and lamented that the church’s views are often used not to promote the common good, but to score political points.

“Catholic teaching has been hijacked by those who break down the breadth of our social doctrine by reducing it to the warped partisan categories of our age and then selecting those teachings for acceptance which promote their partisan worldview,” the bishop said.

Referring to the latest apostolic exhortation from the pope, in which he calls believers to holiness and urges them to embrace the full range of Catholic social teaching, including opposition to abortion as well as concern for the poor and marginalized, Bishop McElroy lamented that “in the partisan reality of our day, these two complementary claims of the Gospel are placed in political opposition.”

“Even worse,” he added, “skewed distillations of

California has over 700 people on death row; executions could resume soon

California is often viewed as the center of progressive politics in the United States. It has some of the strongest environmental regulations in the country and, along with Connecticut, the strongest gun control measures. California's Legislature is already working to reinstate the net neutrality measures recently dumped by the Federal Communications Commission, and many cities have spent the last 18 months actively resisting the Trump administration's siege on undocumented immigrants.

Yet California also has more than twice as many people on death row as the next highest state—746, compared with Florida's 347. That is the largest population of inmates awaiting execution in the Western Hemisphere.

The state has executed only 13 people since 1992 and none since 2006, when a federal court ruled that California's lethal injection procedures violated the constitutional ban on cruel and unusual punishment. "We've had such a long lull now between executions," said Mary Kate DeLucio, communications director at Death Penalty Focus, "that many residents aren't even aware we have it."

Twice since 2006, California voters have had the chance to end the death penalty by referendum. Both initiatives failed. So at a time when much of the country seems to be moving away from the death penalty—2017 saw just 23 executions nationwide, the second lowest since 1991—California may soon begin executing people again.

Among the many organizations working to keep that from happening is the Catholic Mobilizing Network, a national ministry of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph. One thriving C.M.N. program is the Mercy in Action Project, in which Catholics send letters to state officials on behalf of those soon to be executed, pleading for clemency. "Some are really powerful," said the group's managing director, Krisanne Vaillancourt Murphy, "especially when victims' families reach out and say, 'Please don't take another life, this won't help.'"

Their network has "grown exponentially" in the last



Photographers at work in the interior of the lethal injection facility at San Quentin State Prison in San Quentin, Calif., in 2010.

two years, Ms. Vaillancourt Murphy reported. "We now see upwards of a thousand letters per clemency call." And last year across the United States there were 18 stays of execution; some were a matter of legal issues, while others involved state leaders stopping the process.

Contrary to prevailing narratives, C.M.N. finds that banning the death penalty often enjoys bipartisan support. "What we're finding is that the death penalty is not a liberal or conservative issue, a Democrat or Republican issue," she explained. So in Utah, for instance, a recent bill to end the death penalty was sponsored by Republicans, though it ultimately failed to reach the House floor. "They had tons of conservative support," said Ms. Vaillancourt Murphy.

In recent years some have accused Gov. Jerry Brown, a Catholic who is personally opposed to the death penalty, of dragging his feet on setting executions back in motion. As he approaches retirement in January, others hope he will offer some final gesture of mercy to those on death



AP Photo/Eric Risberg

El Salvador court reopens investigation of 1989 Jesuit massacre



CNS photo/Edgardo Ayala

Ivette Escobar, a student at Central American University in San Salvador, helps to finish a rug in honor of the victims during the 25th anniversary commemoration of the Jesuit martyrs in 2014.

A court decision in El Salvador could lead to the reopening of an official investigation into the massacre of six Jesuits, a staff member and her daughter at the University of Central America in 1989. A prominent human rights attorney in the United States believes that the upcoming canonization of Blessed Oscar Romero has been a factor in the decision, encouraging a new urgency among Salvadorans to revisit—and resolve—the nation’s civil war era crimes. Responding to a petition entered by the Institute of Human Rights of the University of Central America in November 2017, a judge in San Salvador ordered on April 17 that government prosecutors revive an investigation into the deadly army raid that had been suspended in 2000.

“The profile of this [U.C.A. massacre] is so much higher now” because of Romero and talk likewise of sainthood for Rutilio Grande—a Jesuit martyred in El Salvador in 1977—that the Salvadoran government and society “need to figure this out,” said Carolyn Patty Blum. “It is not just going to go away.

Ms. Blum is a senior research fellow at the Human Rights Center at the University of California Berkeley. At the Center for Justice and Accountability, also in Berkeley, where she formerly worked, Ms. Blum had for years pursued justice for the U.C.A. massacre victims.

It is not clear that this renewed investigation in El Salvador will mean that this pursuit will finally come to an end. “The federal prosecutor’s will is 100 percent the name of the game here,” she said. “There have to be people in the ministry of justice who are willing to take [the restored investigation] seriously” and follow the evidence wherever it leads.

Kevin Clarke, *chief correspondent*. Twitter: @ClarkeAtAmerica.

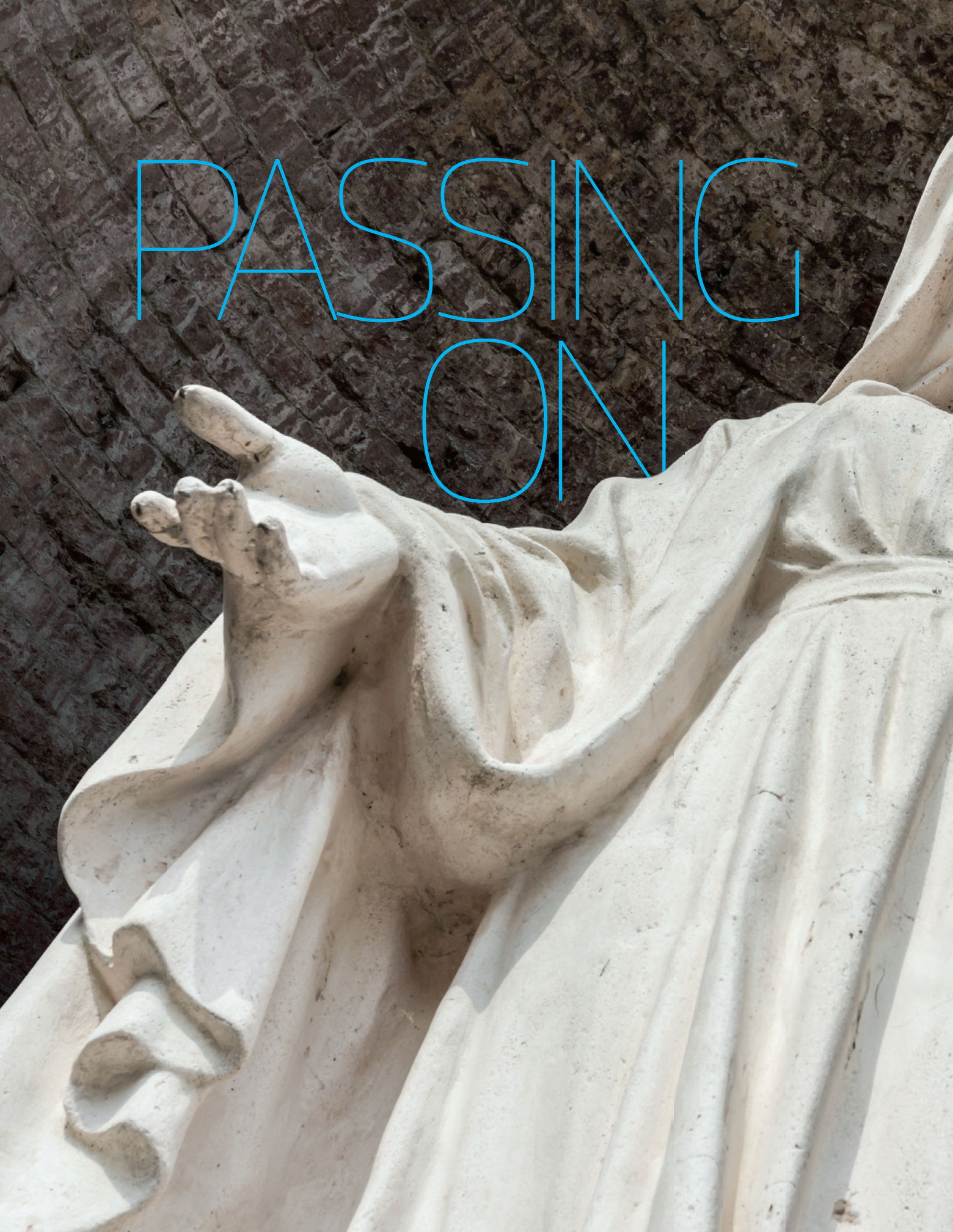
row. California law prevents him from commuting the sentences of anyone convicted of two or more felonies (The Los Angeles Times reports that over half the people on death row fall into this category) without the support of the state’s Supreme Court. But on his own, the governor could offer stays of executions to the rest.

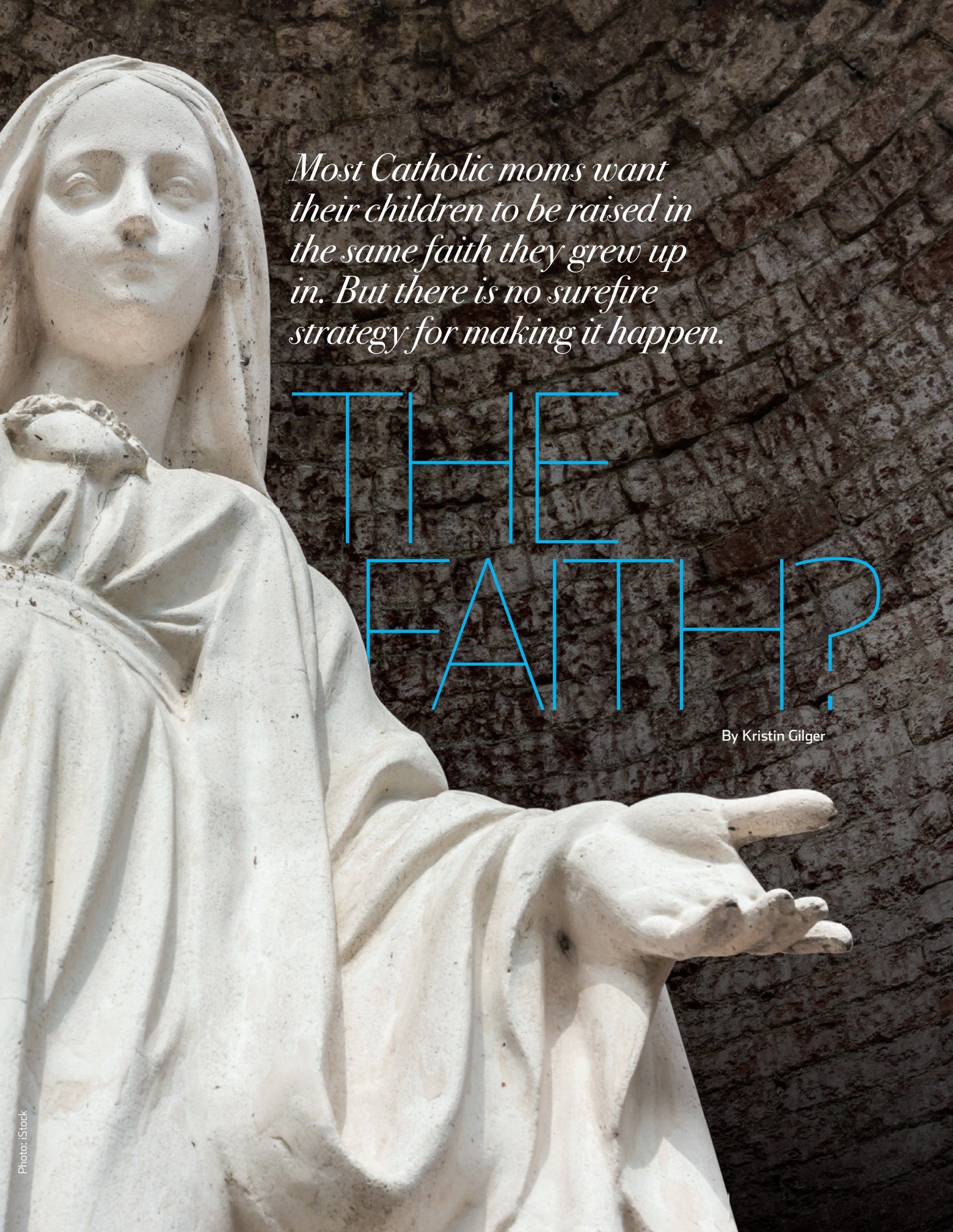
“The good news about California,” said Ms. Vailancourt Murphy, “is they’ve got some amazing groups on the ground making it really hard for the state to move forward with executions.”

“But we really can’t sit back,” she noted. Once court challenges are “ironed out,” she said, “we could start seeing people being killed in California within the next year.”

Jim McDermott, S.J., *Los Angeles correspondent*. Twitter: @PopCulturPriest.

PASSING ON





Most Catholic moms want their children to be raised in the same faith they grew up in. But there is no surefire strategy for making it happen.

THE FAITH?

By Kristin Gilger

When you have children, everyone tells you that your life is going to change. They mean this in both the best and the worst possible ways: There are the predictable losses (lost sleep, lost money, lost time) as well as the wholly unexpected gains of loving a child beyond reason, beyond yourself.

What people do not tell you is that your children are bound to make unexpected and sometimes bewildering choices—and those choices have the power to change you. Children will shake your sense of identity, challenge your beliefs and fundamentally alter who you are.

Anyone who has tried to pass on their religious faith to their children knows this to be true: You can be a good Catholic and raise a passel of atheists. You can be a strident ex-Catholic and raise a priest—like I did.

My son would tell you that I have had a big influence on him. He dives into the world in the same way I do, with the firm intention of changing it. He works out his thoughts by writing them down. He believes in the healing properties of tomato soup and grilled cheese sandwiches on a rainy day. But when it came to making the biggest choice of his life—to convert to Catholicism and become a Jesuit priest—I was left to wonder what influence I had had on him or whether I had wielded any influence at all.

Many of the good Catholic mothers I have talked to are just as bewildered. They did everything in their power to raise children in their faith only to see them adopt other religions or reject God altogether. Some say they were defeated by a culture that increasingly values the material over the spiritual, or they point to the rigidity of doctrine, failures of individual priests, sexual abuse scandals, boring services and bad music. Many blame themselves, although they struggle to say where exactly they went wrong.

Those whose children remain practicing Catholics have some ideas about why that may be the case, but they, too, are well aware that things could easily have turned out differently.

In a recent survey of more than 1,500 U.S. Catholic women, commissioned by **America** and conducted by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, 73 percent of women who are mothers said their children remain in the church. Fifteen percent indicated that none of their children are

now Catholic. The remaining 12 percent reported a mixed result: Some of their children are Catholic and some are not.

Those results closely mirror an informal poll of **America** readers for this article conducted by social media. Just over 25 percent of the more than 500 respondents said their children have left the church—a number that trends suggest will increase as the young children of many respondents grow up. Nationally, nearly half of all children leave the faith of their parents once they reach adolescence.

Creating a Catholic Identity

Many of the mothers who wrote to **America** sounded wistful about that reality. Kathleen Baxter, who lives in rural New York, said her youngest son stopped going to church during his sophomore year of high school. On Sunday mornings, he would stay in bed with the covers pulled up over his head, and no amount of cajoling could convince him to go to Mass. She did not take it well. “My first reaction was: I’m going to force him to go, whether he likes it or not,” she said.

She and her husband are now trying to let him find his own way, hoping that the example they set will tip the balance. Her husband is in the church choir, and Ms. Baxter serves on her parish’s pastoral council. Both serve as lectors and are involved in the adult Christian initiation program (R.C.I.A.).

“I figure if I set a good example, maybe someday he’ll come back,” Ms. Baxter said before adding hopefully, “Maybe he’ll meet a Catholic girl!”

She has reason to be encouraged. Study after study makes it clear that parents—perhaps most especially mothers—do have an enormous influence on their children’s religious choices. The vast majority of adults who adhere to religion were raised in households where religion was valued and practiced.

When I asked Ms. Baxter about why she thought it was important to raise her children Catholic, her response was simple: “I was raised Catholic,” she said. Nearly half of the women in the informal **America** poll referred to the same thing, often using these exact words. They want their children to be raised in the same faith they grew up in. They feel the strong pull of a tradition that has defined their



Photo: Courtesy of family

families, often for generations. Being Catholic is a big part of who they are.

That is certainly true for Kristina Ortega, a mother of two young boys in Los Angeles. Ms. Ortega’s father immigrated to the United States from Mexico, and her mother also is of Mexican heritage. “So much about being Catholic is cultural for me,” Ms. Ortega said. “I don’t know how to separate my Catholic-ness from my Mexican-ness.”

Catholicism, for her, includes assembling altars for the Day of the Dead with her children and praying novenas after the death of a loved one. The family is part of a mostly Latino parish, another way of keeping the children connected to their culture, and the boys, who are 5 and 8, attend Catholic schools, as she and her husband did.

But the Ortegas also are intent on introducing practices of their own. “Part of Latino culture is that religion is something women do,” Ms. Ortega said. “It’s important to me that my children see my husband is engaged.”

Both she and her husband firmly believe that a big part of being Catholic is not just believing in something but acting on those beliefs, something Ms. Ortega credits to her Jesuit education at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles. They know their family is, in her words, “incredibly privileged,” and they want their children to “see what the rest of the world is like.”


The Jesuit church they belong to sits in the midst of a public housing project, which helps drive that lesson

Kathleen Baxter (second from right) with (left to right) her son Matt, 22, husband, Doug, and sons Dan, 26, and Steven, 18.

Kristina Ortega (far right) with her husband, Brady Lowdermilk, and sons, Ben, 8, and Caleb, 5.



Photo: Abel Gutierrez



I think their Catholic upbringing has affected their sense of what is right and what you can and can't do in the world.

home. During Lent, for example, parishioners leave the church to pray the Stations of the Cross in the streets of the community. All four Ortegas take part.

Lauren Schumacher of Centennial, Colo., who has sons almost the same age as Ms. Ortega's, is just as adamant about the importance of "doing Catholicism." "You want them to know it's not just about the prayer," she said. "You also have to help those who are poor and help [your children] realize how fortunate they are."

This is something she and her husband frequently remind their sons in conversation, but it is also something they put into practice in small ways, like visiting nursing homes, distributing blankets to the homeless and joining other parishioners who take gifts to disadvantaged families at Christmas.

Perhaps more important, Ms. Schumacher and her husband try to set an example by curbing their own materialism. "We try to live within our means. You can say that all day long, but if you're not giving to the poor or if you're living some elaborate lifestyle, it doesn't resonate as much," she said. "I work on my materialism so they don't see me buying stuff all the time, stuff I don't need."

Ms. Schumacher and her husband teach their faith in other ways. They follow the rituals of Lent and Advent, using calendars to help their children follow along. They place the figure of baby Jesus in their Nativity scene on Christmas Day. Their boys collect statues of saints. The saints, Ms. Schumacher said, are a big hit, especially St. Jude and St. Michael the Archangel, who occupy places of honor on her sons' nightstands. "Every time they go to the church store, they want a saint statue," she said. "I

have to rein it in."

But most powerful, she said, is prayer. Ms. Schumacher remembers praying about what now seem to her like "ridiculous things" when she was a child. "I think back now and say, 'Was I really praying about my bad skin?' But at least you're talking to God. That's what I want for my kids."

Each night before bed, her children say their own versions of prayers, which draw out concerns they rarely voice in other ways. "I can ask my 7-year-old about his day at school, and he'll say he liked recess, and that's about all the elaboration we get," she said. "But before bed, he might say, 'Oh, God, could you have Jamie be nice to me tomorrow?' or 'Please don't let me have that dream.'"

Sometimes these prayers prompt her to ask questions, but just as often, she leaves the matter up to her son and God, confident that the prayer itself is the comfort he seeks.

'You Want to Share Your Joy'

Sophie Byrnes of Streamwood, Ill., has three grown children she raised on the importance of prayer—prayer she describes as being as essential as breathing and eating.

She was brought up in a home where her mother insisted on the family rosary every day. Sophie says she remembers feeling a little resentful on summer days when she was kneeling inside the house while her friends played, quite audibly, outside. "But I always knew at a young age that your faith will help you in life," she said.

Later, during an abusive marriage, Ms. Byrnes prayed just to get through each day, and she taught her children to pray, too—not formal, rote prayer, but the kind of prayer that consists of talking to God. These conversations took place at all times of the day. "We never left the house without praying," she said. "If we left at three different times, we said a short prayer each time. Whenever we got in the car, we prayed to get home safely."

The most important conversations, though, took place in the evenings as the children got ready for bed. Each of her children had a list of people they prayed for each night. One of her daughters got so caught up in the practice that her list grew to 50 people. "When someone got on her list, they never

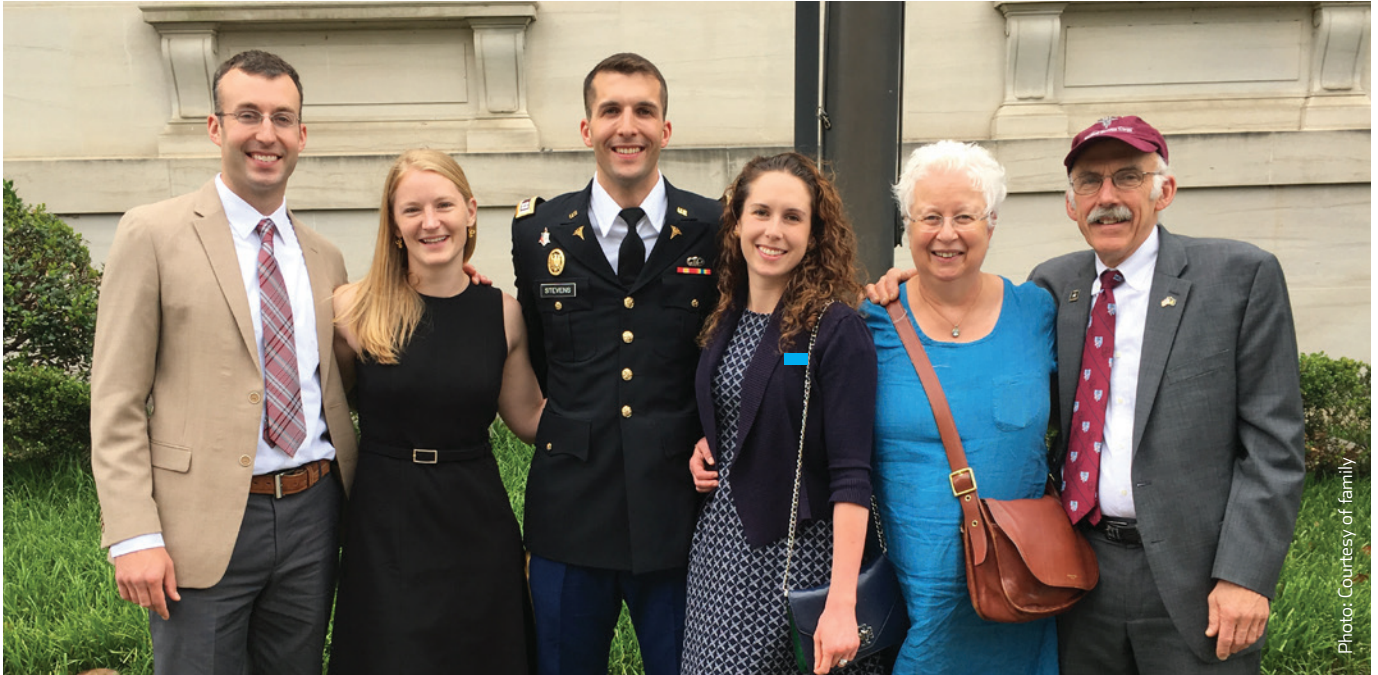


Photo: Courtesy of family

got off,” Ms. Byrnes said with a laugh. “It was tiring.”

She said not going to church was never an option for her children, but she does not think once-a-week Mass was the most important part of their Catholic upbringing; it was making God part of their everyday lives. Ms. Byrnes taught religious education and got involved in her parish and insisted her children do the same. They were altar servers and lectors, sang in the choir and went on mission trips.

“It can’t be just sometimes,” she said of the practice of religion. “What doesn’t work is telling your children about God and not practicing it by your own example. What doesn’t work is if you don’t make God real in your life and your children’s lives.”

All three of Ms. Byrnes’s children, now in their 20s and 30s, are practicing Catholics. She has seen seven grandchildren baptized—baptisms she no longer posts pictures of on social media or tells many friends about because so many would find it a painful reminder that their own grandchildren are not being baptized. “I’m sure,” she said, “that would be the greatest hurt in the world.”

Nancy Berube of Spencer, Mass., does not yet have grandchildren to be baptized, but she has been thinking about it. Her oldest son and his wife are practicing Lutherans, her daughter attends Mass occasionally, and her youngest son “professes to fear that lightning will strike him if he crosses a church threshold.”

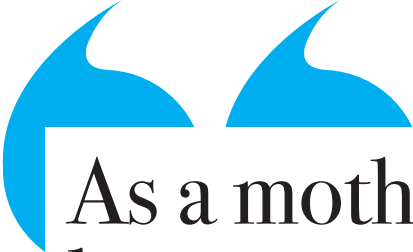
Raising her children in the Catholic faith was ex-

Nancy Berube (second from right) with her husband, John Stevens (far right), and their family, including (left to right) son Greg, 32; his wife, Jayne, 31; son Sam, 27; and daughter, Hannah, 29.

Lauren Schumacher with sons, Oliver, 7, and Eliot, 4; and husband, Vincent.



Photo: Courtesy of family



As a mother, I have two choices, and both involve letting go. ●●

tremely important to Ms. Berube, who once seriously considered becoming a nun. Her husband, although not Catholic, was supportive of her commitment and got involved in their parish as much as she did. Several years ago, he converted to Catholicism, completed an online Catholic study program, joined the parish council and began serving as a eucharistic minister.

Ms. Berube, meanwhile, has become an associate of the Daughters of the Holy Spirit, the order of women religious she considered joining as a young woman. The lay associates gather for prayer, Bible readings and retreats, and they work to promote a variety of social justice and human rights causes across five continents. The work gives Ms. Berube, a family physician, a Catholic community beyond her parish and a way to practice her faith in ways that are meaningful to her.

Ms. Berube has tried to talk to her children about the central role that Catholicism plays in her life and that of her husband, but these attempts make them uncomfortable. Despite the fact that two of her sons are in the U.S. military, which “gives them orders all the time, they don’t like being told what to do by their mother,” she quipped. Besides, she does not believe in a “hard sell for religion,” and she does not want to drive a wedge between them and herself and her husband.

So she waits.

“I find the church [to be] a source of great joy and would love to be able to share that with them. However, it has to be on their own terms,” she said. “They’re thinking people; they’re very moral and upright, and I think their Catholic upbringing has affected their sense of what is right and what you can and can’t do in the world.”

While Ms. Berube waits, she considers what St. Monica could have done to make St. Augustine behave himself during most of his early adulthood. “He came around, and he was way more messed up than my kids are,” she said with a laugh. “But I understand her wanting him to be part of something that gave her joy because you want to share your joy with them.”

These mothers have learned what we all learn at some point—that we do not control our children’s choices; we only control our response to those choices.

Letting Go

When my son, Patrick, announced that he had decided to enter the Society of Jesus, my husband and I were incredulous. “If you want to be a priest why not become an Episcopalian priest?” I asked him. “That’s the church you were raised in, and you could still get married.” I did not need to finish the sentence. Patrick already knew that what I really cared about was not some hypothetical daughter-in-law; it was grandchildren—preferably lots of them.

I have always thought Patrick would make a great husband and dad. Like his father, he is playful and loving and thoughtful. He actually likes to talk about his feelings, and he never asks much for himself. He is the kind of guy who will take your hand without warning and hold it close and tell you that he loves you.

No matter where he is, he notices babies. We can be in line to order coffee, walking through a museum or pushing a cart through a grocery store, and he will spot one in a mother’s arms or peeking out of a pack strapped to a dad’s back. His reaction reminds me of the stuffed toy glowworm he had when he was small—something bright and warm lights up inside of him.

He does not often approach these babies—that is too creepy for a single man, especially for a priest in these tendentious days—but you can tell he wants to. And when he is around his friends’ or his sisters’ babies, when he does not have to worry about what people think, he will get down on the floor with them and play like a kid and hold them



The author with her son, Patrick Gilger, S.J.

so close it's as if he's inhaling them.

I know now that there was something else calling my son, something even more compelling than babies, and that is the call—the vocation—he ultimately heeded. It took me several years to accept his decision; I am still working to fully understand it.

We have spent countless hours talking about what it is like to be a Jesuit living in a community of religious men, the spaces he seems to fill in the lives of other people and what he hopes to accomplish. I ask him—often—whether he is happy. And I have begun going to church again, this time with a lot less willfulness and a great deal more humbleness. I am giving Catholicism a second chance.

I have come to realize that, as a mother, I have two choices, and both involve letting go. I can surrender my

son to a choice I would not have made for him, or I can acknowledge what I do not know and what I cannot control and walk with him.

Patrick would put it this way: Motherhood, like any vocation, is a calling—the voice of another calling us to something more. Sometimes the voice that is calling is God's. Sometimes it is that of your children. Sometimes it is hard to tell them apart.

Kristin Gilger is the senior associate dean at the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication and the executive director of the Donald W. Reynolds National Center for Business Journalism at Arizona State University in Phoenix, Ariz.

Revisiting the Dictatorship of Relativism

Did Benedict XVI predict the rise of Trump and fake news?

By Aaron Pidel

More than 13 years ago, in a homily given at the conclave that would later elect him Pope Benedict XVI, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger spoke of a growing “dictatorship of relativism that does not recognize anything as definitive and whose ultimate goal consists solely of one’s own ego and desires.” The urgent call for a return to truth-based religion, far from repelling the cardinals, distinguished Ratzinger as the frontrunner for papal office.

Ratzinger’s papal platform did not prove broadly appealing. The secular pundits of the last decade often ignored his warning as the scare tactic of a dogmatist unable to adjust to the benign pluralism of a world that had, in keeping with Kant’s rallying cry, “dared to think.” I doubt the pope emeritus has much energy nowadays to follow the many instructive ironies of the Trump era; but if he did, he might take just the tiniest bit of satisfaction in seeing not just the religious right but also the secular left denouncing a growing “dictatorship of relativism.” Ratzinger’s distinctive emphasis on freedom’s need for truth, in other words, may have come not too late but too early to find a bipartisan hearing in the United States.

CNS photo/Paul Haring





Pope Benedict XVI's historical experience and rootedness in the Christian tradition allow him to chart the path for a return to "reality-based" thinking.

Examples of the secular left's re-enchantment with objective reality abound. Professor Mark Lilla of Columbia University was perhaps the first out of the gate with his interpretation of Hillary Clinton's defeat as "the end of identity liberalism" in a New York Times article in November 2016. Obsession with diversity has produced, he laments, a "generation of liberals and progressives narcissistically unaware of conditions outside their self-defined group." Donald J. Trump's victory shows that this has ultimately "encouraged white, rural, religious Americans to think of themselves as a disadvantaged group whose identity is being threatened or ignored." The way back for Democrats, accordingly, lies in recovering a rhetoric of the common good and a shared destiny. Though Lilla does not use the language of "natural" or "objective" morality, he presupposes their reality. For how can a good be common, or a destiny shared, unless it is somehow discernible by all reasonable people?

Media voices, too, perhaps stung by the accusations of spreading "fake news," now treat not cronyism but willful solipsism as the politician's new capital sin. When Savannah Guthrie disputes Paul Ryan's claim that the Republican budget will benefit the middle class, for instance, she asks, "Are you living in a fantasy world?"

But perhaps the most ambitious and far-reaching truth-based criticism of the Trump-era United States can be found in Kurt Andersen's article for *The Atlantic*, "How America Lost its Mind," in September 2017. Andersen combines Guthrie's charges of fantasy with Lilla's narrative of the rightward migration of the left's intellectual extravagances. Yes, he concedes, the 1960s, the Eden of the baby-boomer liberals, were in many ways a retreat from reality into fantasy. In the '60s, the Esalen Institute (which even today identifies itself as a "world-wide network of seekers who look beyond dogma to explore deeper spiritual possibilities") became a kind of epicenter for an endless variety of ecstatic, dionysiac mysticisms. Shamanic rituals, mescaline consumption, healing energies and tantric sex all combined to form the potent spiritual cocktail known as the New Age movement.

In Lilla's telling this kind of magical thinking eventually found its academic expression in a mania for "deconstructionism." Michel Foucault's seminal argument in *Folie et Dérison*—that the difference between sanity and insanity rests entirely on social convention and that the very distinction serves only to legitimize hierarchies of domination—has set the research and teaching agendas of humanities professors ever since. Many students, even at Catholic



universities, graduate more familiar with the principle that "all distinctions are violent" than with St. Paul's vision of the church as a many-membered body.

The irony in this evolution of U.S. culture, Andersen notes, is not that ivory-tower insanity failed to remain confined to the academy but that postmodernism took deepest root in the sector of society that is normally most suspicious of university elites. The new communication vectors of social media and talk radio, with their broad accessibility and immunity from peer review, accelerated the rightward movement of the belief that all reality is socially "constructed" to such an extent that "starting in the 1990s, America's unhinged right became much larger and more influential than its unhinged left."

As evidence of the right's proclivity toward fantasy, Andersen recalls its many paranoia-based enthusiasms: fear of one-world government, gun-control fanaticism, seven-day creationism, climate-change skepticism and more. Perhaps the most insightful aspect of Andersen's narrative is his conclusion that right and left extremes have now met: "Neither side has noticed, but large factions of the elite left and the populist right have been on the same team."



Mark Zuckerberg of Facebook, left, is greeted by Senator John Kennedy, Republican of Louisiana, before a joint hearing of the Commerce and Judiciary Committees on Capitol Hill in Washington on April 10, 2018.

RATZINGER AND REALITY-BASED THINKING

But at least one person did notice the secret kinship, the penchant for fantasy common to both the social-constructionist left and the identitarian right: Joseph Ratzinger. He evoked both in his coolly received phrase, “the dictatorship of relativism.” Though Ratzinger is often portrayed as a youthful liberal frightened by the chaotic 1960s into authoritarian rigidity, his writings suggest that he was “woke” not by the student riots of 1968 but by the Nazi riots of the 1930s. A background criterion silently guides his discernment of any theological proposal: Would a Christianity guided by this principle have withstood the spell of National Socialism? Already in his essay “Salvation Outside the Church?” (1965), Ratzinger casts doubt on the widespread belief that God cares not about the content but only about the sincerity of our beliefs. Should we not then have just encouraged Nazis to be good Nazis? After all, Ratzinger would later recall in a 1991 address delivered to the U.S. bishops in Dallas, even some Nazi consciences felt quite certain of the rightness of their cause. Having witnessed the rise of the original “alt-right,” Ratzinger could not easily forget that unchecked relativism—private or collective—

sooner or later shows its demonic face.

But Ratzinger did more than earn the right to say “I told you so” for having arrived earlier at conclusions voiced by today’s chattering classes. His historical experience and rootedness in the Christian tradition allow him to chart the path for a return to “reality-based” thinking that is both more consistent and less naïve.

To take one example of Ratzinger’s greater consistency, we might compare Andersen’s and Ratzinger’s respective attitudes toward abortion. Andersen considers the legalization of abortion to be one of the healthy innovations achieved when the “reality-based left” was still culturally ascendant. Ratzinger, in stark contrast, takes the defense of the right to abortion to be a paradigm case of flight into subjectivist fantasy. In *Truth and Tolerance* (2003), he meditates at length on pregnancy, because there the “basic shape of human freedom, its typically human character, becomes clear.” No one is more dependent on another, more undeniably a “being-from,” than a child in utero. And no one is more oriented toward another, more obviously a “being-for,” than a pregnant mother, whose very bodily equilibrium changes to welcome the stranger.



Trumpism both terrifies and fascinates precisely because every attempt to denounce it reveals the internal inconsistencies in American culture. ●●

If we are honest, Ratzinger continues, we never outgrow this interdependence. Our nature is such that we exercise our agency only within a “network of services”—a freedom received “from” others on whom we depend and a freedom lived “for” others who depend on us. Summing up his reflections, Ratzinger observes:

It has thus become fairly clear that freedom is linked to a yardstick, the yardstick of reality—to truth. Freedom to destroy oneself or to destroy another is not freedom but a diabolical parody. The freedom of man is a shared freedom, freedom in a coexistence of other freedoms, which are mutually limiting and thus mutually supportive: freedom must be measured according to what I am, what we are—otherwise it abolishes itself.

The first good to be sacrificed to the idol of limitless freedom, in other words, will be reality-based thinking, which will invariably be followed by the immolation of freedom itself. The Catholic author Flannery O’Connor summed up the dynamic even more succinctly: “When tenderness is detached from the source of tenderness, its logical outcome is terror.”

MAGICAL THINKING

Ratzinger’s prognosis perhaps proves especially apt in the United States, where the need to find constitutional support for abortion has led to some of the most fantastical jurisprudential reasoning in the history of the Supreme Court. The court reached the height of magical thinking with *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* (1992), which ruled that requiring spousal notification prior to abortion posed an “undue burden” on a woman’s freedom. “At the heart of liberty,” the plurality opinion

reasoned, “is the right to define one’s own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life.” If legal abortion was, as Andersen presumes, a triumph of the “reality-based left,” it was a pyrrhic one.

Once the right to define reality became lodged somewhere in the body of law, it quickly metastasized. It resurfaced most recently in *Packingham v. North Carolina* (June 2017), where Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy applied *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*’s privatized model of freedom to the internet—the very medium Andersen and others credit with enabling the rise of the alt-right.

We cannot deny registered sex offenders access to internet sites visited by children, Kennedy opines, not because the restriction is too ill-defined, but because it impedes access to an instrument of self-definition: “While we now may be coming to the realization that the Cyber Age is a revolution of historic proportions, we cannot appreciate yet its full dimensions and vast potential to alter how we think, express ourselves, and define who we want to be.” If the Supreme Court now sees internet access, like abortion, implied in the right to define our reality, should abortion rights advocates complain when the alt-right jealously guards its constitutional freedoms? Or should they just hope that the construction of dark cyberscapes of white supremacy remains “legal, safe and rare”?

Besides earning higher marks for internal consistency, Ratzinger also shows far less naïveté about the prospect of settling upon a common “yardstick of reality.” Andersen conjectures that religious belief makes the right more fantasy-prone than the left, whose secular proclivities make it more docile to the corrective influence of science and experts. Just how conspiracy theories came to hold sway over the *irreligious* right, Anderson does not explain. Such explanations might, after all, distract from the clarity of the distinction to be reinforced: faith lies on the side of irrationality and scientific expertise on the side of rationality.

Given this view, Andersen hardly feels the need to distinguish carefully within the mixed bag of florid religiosity to be found in the United States. “Much more than the other billion or so people in the developed world,” he writes, “we Americans believe—*really believe*—in the supernatural and the miraculous, in Satan on Earth, in reports of recent trips to and from heaven,

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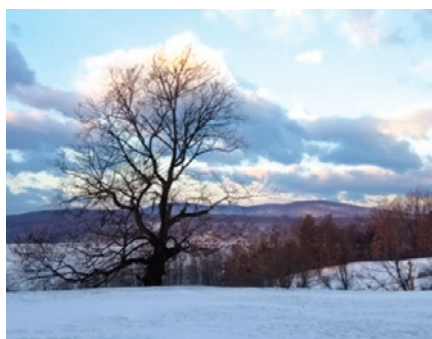
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(Continued from Page 30)

and in a story of life's instantaneous creation several thousand years ago."

Indicative of Andersen's tone-deafness to things religious is the fact that he places miracles and seven-day creationism, the existence of grace and out-of-body experiences all on the same level. He dismisses—*really dismisses*—everything immaterial as equally implausible.

SCIENTIFIC FIDEISM

Ratzinger, of course, shows himself to be more nuanced. For him, the frontier between rationality and irrationality does not coincide neatly with the boundary between science and religion. Rather, it transects science and religion alike. In *Truth and Tolerance*, published long before Andersen sounded the alarm, Ratzinger was already cautioning against New Age spirituality and the Esalen Institute for their "completely irrationalist pattern of religion."

He observed just a few years later in his much-criticized Regensburg Address (2006), moreover, that any religion unable to persuade through reason would inevitably resort to violence. His citation of a medieval Christian polemic against Islam distracted the world from this central message, which was to warn against irrationalism in all religions, Islam and Christianity alike. Ratzinger's exhortation implied that Islam could recover its philosophical legacy and was not necessarily irrational. This is certainly more generous than Andersen's operative presumption that religion, by its very nature, is disposed toward fantasy and coercive intolerance.

If Ratzinger insists that faith needs reason for its own health, he is no less insistent that reason—especially scientific reason—needs to be chastened by faith if it is to avoid its own excesses. Scientism, when unchecked, leads to the irrational belief that science can answer all questions. Ratzinger observed in an essay from the 1970s, "Farewell to the Devil?", that for every Galileo affair, in which the church seems to intrude overconfidently into the domain of science, there are as many cases where science's heedlessness of religious wisdom produces pseudoscience. He again mentions, in particular, the anthropology of National Socialism, whose doctrine of racial inequality then represented something like a scientific consensus.

To understand just how established was the "science" of social Darwinism, with its teaching that different races represented different levels of evolutionary development, one need only recall that the Bronx Zoo once kept an African pygmy among its specimens. Elite U.S. institutions like Harvard taught it like dogma, crusading to abet natural selection by sterilizing undesirables. It has been revealed

recently that not even Pierre Teilhard de Chardin's Christian evolutionary vision could resist the pull of eugenicist ideology.

Are today's explanations of every feature of human existence according to supposed evolutionary advantage—from consciousness to art to love—any more rational than the scientific racism of the first half of the 1900s? Few have been willing to admit scientific fideism as baldly as the evolutionary biologist Richard Lewontin once did:

We take the side of science *in spite* of the patent absurdity of some of its constructs, in spite of its failure to fulfill many of its extravagant promises of health and life.... [W]e are forced by our *a priori* adherence to material causes to create an apparatus of investigation and a set of concepts that produce material explanations, no matter how counter-intuitive, no matter how mystifying to the uninitiated. Moreover, that materialism is absolute, for we cannot allow a Divine Foot in the door.

Science, as soon as it inflates its materialist method into a philosophy of life, commits to a creed as impervious to disproof as that of any Wiccan coven or Charlottesville rally. The historical entanglements between scientism and racism certainly suggest as much.

Trumpism both terrifies and fascinates precisely because every attempt to denounce it reveals the internal inconsistencies in American culture. The religious right becomes tongue-tied explaining its support for a religious illiterate like Trump or a sexually predatory politician like Roy Moore. The secular left stammers to explain why it should oppose self-constructed identity movements like the alt-right. If Ratzinger were pondering the landscape of our civil society, he would doubtlessly agree with Andersen that America's right flank needs a dose of reality. But he would likewise remind Andersen's "reality-based left" that the greater part of reality escapes the microscope's gaze and the expert's prognosis.

Indeed, the fundamental reality to which Americans, both right- and left-leaning, must return is that of being God's creatures. Only when we accept the shape of human existence as something given by God, to be discovered collaboratively rather than defined privately, can we resist the encircling dictatorship of relativism.

Aaron Pidel, S.J., is an assistant professor of theology at Marquette University.

A 'Most Unusual Colloquy'

A moment of connection in the trial of the Catonsville Nine

On May 17, 1968, nine Catholic peace activists burned draft files in an act of protest against the Vietnam War. During their ensuing trial, the Catonsville Nine appealed repeatedly to God's higher law and defended their actions as required by their conscience and religious convictions. The judge, however, refused to allow the jury to consider this defense, and they were found guilty.

This excerpt from America's report of the trial (10/26/68) relates a "most unusual colloquy" between the defendants and the judge. Though neither side managed to convince the other, they reached a moment of significant understanding despite substantive moral disagreements. "Colloquy" is the term St. Ignatius uses for conversation with God in prayer, the way "one friend speaks to another." As the United States continues to be divided over protests, it is also a reminder of the reasons for hope.

Just before the verdict was returned, however, a most unusual colloquy took place...

[Fr. Daniel Berrigan] told the judge that the nine were having great difficulty adjusting to a courtroom from which the issues that most concerned them were excluded. He compared the trial to an autopsy in which the defendants were dismembered to see if they had souls.... Judge Thomsen then repeated a statement he had made several times during the trial, namely, that he admired the sense of vocation that had prompted the nine to act, but that he had a job to do, a job to which he was bound by a long tradition of law....

When Fr. Berrigan replied that the law effectively excluded the enormous question of personal conscience from the courtroom, Judge Thomsen abandoned the formality of the bench and answered him simply as a private citizen. "I would be a funny sort of man if I were not moved by the sincerity of your views," he said. "I am sure that many people have been moved by them. I doubt that many of the jurors have any enthusiasm for the work they have to do." It was very clear to him, he said, that the majority of the American people wished to terminate the war in Vietnam. The question was how best to do it. "I don't know how to do it," the judge admitted. "I will vote in the election for the men who may know how to do it."

...

Fr. Daniel Berrigan stepped forward and spoke to the judge. "We want-

ed to thank you, your honor. We are not seeking mercy, we accept the rigors of the court, we only wish to be useful to the poor of the world." He paused, then made a request that startled the judge. "Would you mind if we closed with the Our Father?" Judge Thomsen rocked back in his chair for a moment, silent, thoughtful. He saw U.S. Attorney Stephen Sachs at the back of the courtroom and passed the request to him. "Before ruling," the judge said, "I would like to consult the chief legal officer of the United States in this district." Mr. Sachs, an intense, extremely competent young lawyer, strode toward the front of the courtroom with his head down and his hands jammed deep in his pockets. By the time he reached the defendants' seats, he had made his decision. "The government has no objection, your honor. In fact, it rather welcomes the idea."

The entire courtroom, including the judge and the prosecuting attorneys, rose as one. When the defendants began the prayer, the audience, which was packed with their families and friends, prayed with them. Some of the spectators joined hands and several women burst into tears. As the ancient phrases of praise and petition echoed through the hushed chamber, the legal proceeding of the United States of America versus the Catonsville Nine indeed became the religious event that, for the defendants, it had been all along.

Thomas M. Gannon, S.J.

Reclaiming Jesus

A Confession of Faith in a Time of Crisis

We are living through perilous and polarizing times as a nation, with a dangerous crisis of moral and political leadership at the highest levels of our government and in our churches. We believe the soul of the nation and the integrity of faith are now at stake.

It is time to be followers of Jesus before anything else—nationality, political party, race, ethnicity, gender, geography. Our identity in Christ precedes every other identity.

When politics undermines our theology, we must examine that politics. The church's role is to change the world through the life and love of Jesus Christ. The government's role is to serve the common good by protecting justice and peace. When that role is undermined by political leadership, faith leaders must stand up and speak out. Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said, "The church must be reminded that it is not the master or the servant of the state, but rather the conscience of the state."

It is often the duty of Christian leaders, espe-

cially elders, to speak the truth in love to our churches and to name and warn against temptations, racial and cultural captivities, false doctrines, and political idolatries—and even our complicity in them. We do so here with humility, prayer, and a deep dependency on the grace and Holy Spirit of God.

Jesus is Lord. That is our foundational confession. If Jesus is Lord, then Caesar was not—nor any other political ruler since. We pray, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10). Our faith is personal but never private, meant not only for heaven but for this earth.

Applying what "Jesus is Lord" means today is the message we commend as elders to our churches. We pray that we, as followers of Jesus, will find the depth of faith to match the danger of our political crisis.

The present crisis calls us to go deeper—deeper into our relationship to God; into our relationships with each other, especially across racial, eth-

nic, and national lines; and into our relationships with the most vulnerable, who are at greatest risk.

We need to recover the power of confessing our faith. Lament, repent, and then repair. If Jesus is Lord, there is always space for grace. We believe it is time to speak and to act in faith and conscience, not because of politics, but because we are disciples of Jesus Christ—to whom be all authority, honor, and glory. He is the light in our darkness. "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8:12).

Signed: *Bishop Carroll A. Baltimore, Rev. Dr. Peter Borgdorff, Dr. Amos Brown, Rev. Dr. Walter Brueggemann, Dr. Tony Campolo, Dr. Iva Caruthers, Bishop Michael Curry, Rev. Dr. James Forbes, Rev. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, Dr. Cynthia Hale, Rev. Dr. Richard Hamm, Rev. Dr. Joel Hunter, Rev. Dr. Jo Anne Lyon, Bishop Vashti McKenzie, Rev. Dr. Otis Moss, Jr., Dr. John Perkins, Bishop Lawrence Reddick, Fr. Richard Rohr, Dr. Ron Sider, Rev. Jim Wallis, Rev. Dr. Sharon Watkins, Dr. Barbara Williams-Skinner, Bishop Will Willimon*

I. WE BELIEVE each human being is made in God's image and likeness. Racial bigotry is a brutal denial of the image of God in some of the children of God.

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III. WE BELIEVE how we treat the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, the stranger, the sick, and the prisoner is how we treat Christ himself.

THEREFORE, WE REJECT the language and policies of political leaders who would debase and abandon the most vulnerable children of God. We strongly deplore the growing attacks on immigrants and refugees; we won't accept the neglect of the well-being of low-income families and children.

V. WE BELIEVE that Christ's way of leadership is servanthood, not domination. We support democracy, not because we believe in human perfection, but because we do not.

THEREFORE, WE REJECT any moves toward autocratic political leadership and authoritarian rule. We believe authoritarian political leadership is a theological danger threatening democracy and the common good—and we will resist it.

II. WE BELIEVE we are one body. In Christ, there is to be no oppression based on race, gender, identity, or class.

THEREFORE, WE REJECT misogyny, the mistreatment, violent abuse, sexual harassment, and assault of women being further revealed in our culture and politics, including in our churches, and the oppression of any other child of God.

IV. WE BELIEVE that truth is morally central to our personal and public lives. Jesus promises, "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:32).

THEREFORE, WE REJECT the practice and pattern of lying that is invading our political and civil life. The normalization of lying presents a profound moral danger to the fabric of society.

VI. WE BELIEVE Jesus when he tells us to go into all nations making disciples. Our churches and our nations are part of an international community whose interests always surpass national boundaries. We in turn should love and serve the world and all its inhabitants rather than to seek first narrow nationalistic prerogatives.

THEREFORE, WE REJECT "America first" as a theological heresy for followers of Christ. While we share a patriotic love for our country, we reject xenophobic or ethnic nationalism that places one nation over others as a political goal.

Full statement and resources available at ReclaimingJesus.org.

I may never be able to thank the good Samaritan who saved my life

By Jill Brennan O'Brien

Three years ago, my life was saved by a 21-year-old man I have never met and may never know. He had registered to be a bone marrow donor through an international organization that pairs anonymous donors with recipients.

To this day, I do not know his name, or even what country he is from. But I do know that at a very tender age he made a sacrifice to help a stranger. If that is not the definition of the neighbor-love Christ calls us to, I don't know what is.

After I had struggled for several years with a blood disorder that doctors could not quite figure out, specialists at the Mayo Clinic had finally determined that I had aplastic anemia, a rare condition in which the bone marrow stops producing enough new blood cells. They felt that the best hope for a cure was a bone marrow (stem cell) transplant. I would need to take a leave from my job as a young assistant professor of theological ethics at Creighton University in Omaha, Neb. To be near my family, I traveled to Connecticut and started working with a hematologist at Yale University. He was optimistic that a transplant could help me and even felt that it could cure the underlying lupus I had been diagnosed with a decade earlier.

But I would need help from an anonymous donor—my only sibling was not a match, and I had no other immediate rel-

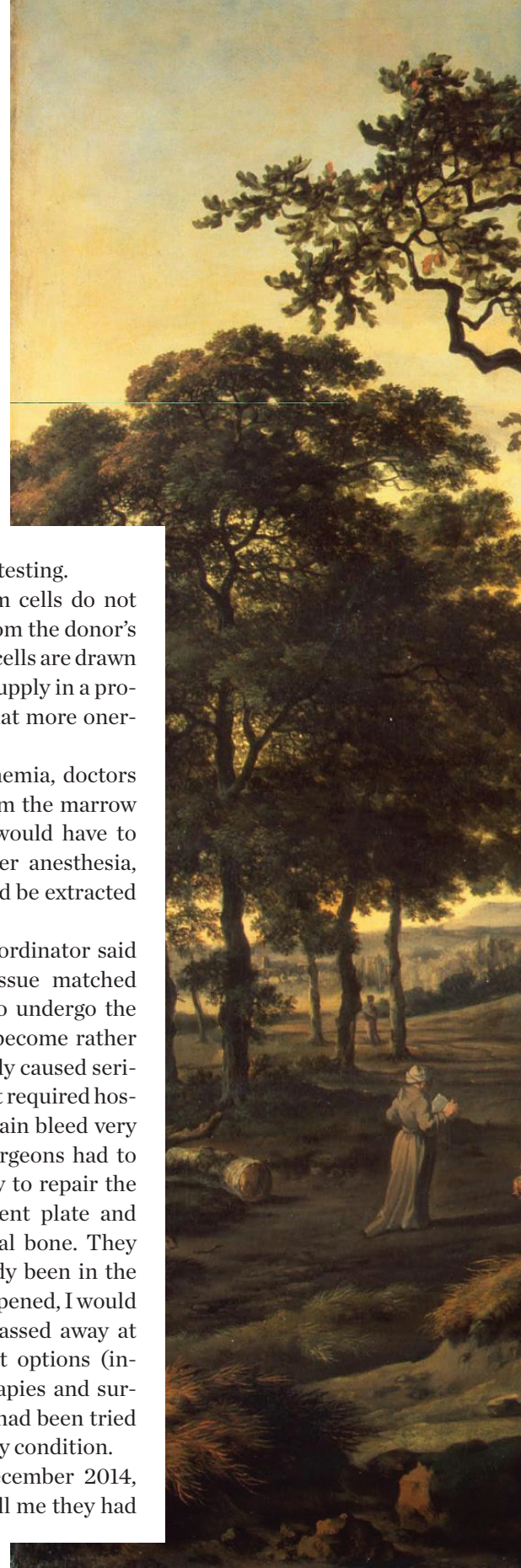
atives who were eligible for testing.

In most cases, the stem cells do not need to be taken directly from the donor's bone marrow—instead, the cells are drawn from the peripheral blood supply in a procedure that is only somewhat more onerous than giving blood.

But to treat aplastic anemia, doctors prefer to use stem cells from the marrow itself. For that my donor would have to undergo an operation under anesthesia, in which marrow cells would be extracted from the hip bone.

The Yale transplant coordinator said that two people whose tissue matched mine had been unwilling to undergo the surgery. My situation had become rather dire—the anemia had already caused serious abdominal bleeding that required hospitalization, and a major brain bleed very nearly killed me. (Neurosurgeons had to perform emergency surgery to repair the bleed, installing a permanent plate and screws onto my left parietal bone. They said that if I had not already been in the hospital when the bleed happened, I would have quickly and quietly passed away at home.) All other treatment options (including various chemotherapies and surgery to remove my spleen) had been tried and had failed to improve my condition.

Finally, one day in December 2014, the coordinator called to tell me they had





"Parable of the Good Samaritan," Jan Wijnants, Wikimedia Commons, the free media repository. Source/Photographer: The Hermitage, St. Petersburg



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Through the compassionate act of a stranger, who stepped up to help me after two others had passed me by, my life was saved. 🙏🙏

a match and that this donor was willing to go through the surgical extraction. I would need to be admitted to the hospital very soon for the pretransplant procedure.

I felt a strange combination of emotions. Relief, certainly—but also fear and a strange guilt that I could not quite name at first. I soon realized it was a sense of unworthiness in response to such an altruistic gesture by a complete stranger. Would I ever have made a choice like that? How many 21-year-olds want to spend their Christmas break recuperating from a surgery that entails repeated jabs deep into their hip?

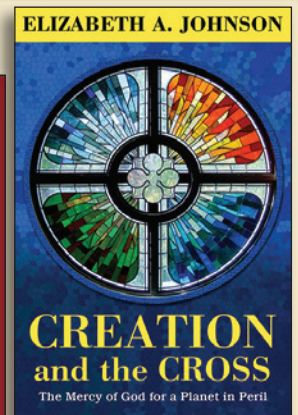
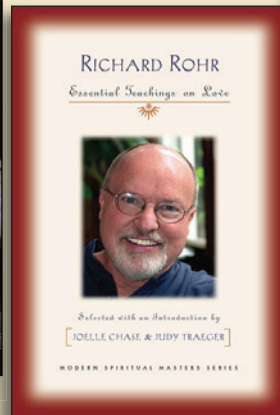
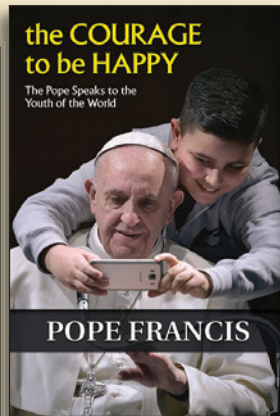
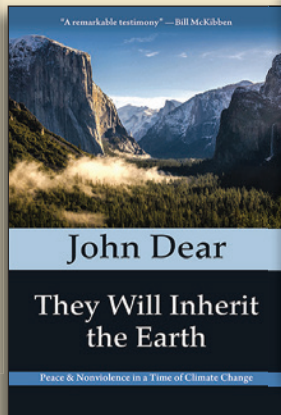
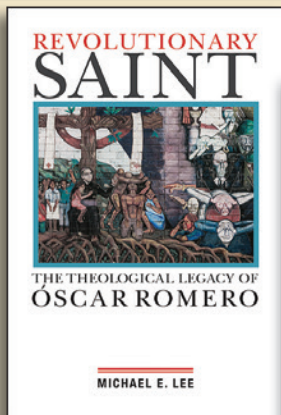
Fear quickly overtook those musings—and it was well founded. The pretransplant procedure involved days of toxic chemotherapy and total body irradiation, which led to immediate complications (kidney and respiratory failure). The doctors decided to go ahead with the marrow transplant despite my rapid deterioration, while the treatment team tried mask after mask to help me to breathe—we finally settled on one I referred to as the Darth Vader mask because it covered my entire face and muffled my speech.

After the transplant was done, the donor cells were now circulating through my bloodstream, but I continued to struggle to survive. Doctors punctured my chest with hollow tubes in a last-ditch effort to remove the fluid stubbornly suffocating my lungs; my dialysis-cleansed blood coursed coldly through my veins; and my bruised body grew increasingly alien to me.

But despite the complications, the new immune cells from the donor were silently taking hold in my ravaged system. My blood work began to show hopeful signs that the transplant had been a success in curing the aplastic anemia.

A few months after the transplant, I sent my donor an anonymous card. (The transplant registry protects the identity of both the donor and recipient.) I kept it brief, with no mention of the harrowing details. I said only that

(Continued on Page 42)



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(Continued from Page 40)

I was healing, and that I was grateful for his help. He never wrote me back. I felt compelled to respect his privacy, so I never attempted to contact him again.

Five months after the transplant, I moved back to Omaha to try to return to my job at Creighton—but I soon had to concede that I was still too sick to be productive. With the support of my generous colleagues from the theology department, I resigned from my faculty position and moved home to Connecticut to allow my body and spirit to recover from all I had gone through.

By some divine providence, I finally found my way this past September to an editorial position at Orbis Books, which is the publishing arm of the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers. I am again surrounded by colleagues who are kind and smart, and I feel blessed.

One of the many things I was told about the marrow transplant process is that, in a certain way, you are “re-born.” Your own immune system is decimated so that your body will not reject the donor’s cells. You lose all your childhood immunities, and you are in some ways like a baby—vulnerable, fragile, helpless. You have to be protected from any possible infection until the new immune system begins to take hold. You are hairless from the chemo and radiation, your skin is pale, and you are too weak to walk at first.

Receiving the transplant is oddly anticlimactic—the marrow cells are infused intravenously from a bag that looks exactly like the many hundreds of bags of cells you have already received in regular blood transfusions. You feel nothing unusual as it goes in.

But this particular transfusion is special. Gradually, if all goes well, these donor cells give you nothing less than new life. This was certainly true for me—both the anemia and lupus were cured. The grafted immune system was establishing itself, and I was slowly gaining strength.

After six months, my hair finally started to grow, as it does for all newborns. In the 18 months following the transplant, I went from being in a wheelchair and dependent upon oxygen to running local road races.

Through the compassionate act of a stranger, who stepped up to help me after two others had passed me by, my life was saved. He may be an atheist, a humanist, a Christian, a Muslim. But like the good Samaritan in Luke’s Gospel, he showed mercy to a fellow human being. Imagine if all of us could go and do likewise.

Jill Brennan O’Brien is an editor at Orbis Books in Ossining, N.Y. She holds a doctorate in theological ethics from Boston College.



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Michelangelo's critics failed to appreciate that the nude was an important aspect of his artistic and theological convictions.

HEAVENLY BODIES, FROM MICHELANGELO TO DOLCE & GABBANA

By David Tracy

Editor's Note:

The announcement of the Metropolitan Museum of Art Costume Institute's new show, "Heavenly Bodies: Fashion and the Catholic Imagination," which highlights fashion influenced by both Catholic religious art and religious clothing (mainly liturgical vestments), prompted a mix of reactions, from warm approval to heated outrage.

Yet the new exhibit, which opened in New York on May 10, is neither surprising nor disrespectful. "Heavenly Bodies" is unsurprising because the highly visual culture of Catholicism is a natural influence for all manner of artists, fashion designers not exempted. The show is respectful, not only thanks to the Met's overall erudition but also because the show's curators (full disclosure: I briefly consulted for them) were highly sensitive to Catholic sensibilities. No less than Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi, prefect of the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Culture,

recognized as much when he shared the stage with representatives from the Costume Institute, including Anna Wintour and Andrew Bolton, at the Rome launch of the exhibit. The Vatican also loaned several liturgical items for display in the show. In fact, the only surprise may be why it took the Met so long to arrange the exhibit.

The biggest surprise for Catholics may be the author of the introduction to the show's catalogue: one of the world's great contemporary theologians, the Rev. David Tracy, professor emeritus of Catholic studies at the University of Chicago and author of the highly influential book *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism*. In the following essay, excerpted from the catalogue, Professor Tracy takes one Catholic artist, Michelangelo, and situates him within the larger Catholic artistic imagination.

...

The highly visual culture of Catholicism is a natural influence for all manner of artists

The history of Catholic theology is a rich and pluralistic one. Some eras give rise to a theological colossus who is singular in achievement: Augustine in the fourth and fifth centuries; Thomas Aquinas in the Middle Ages. Paradoxically, in some periods the leading Catholic thinkers are not the official theologians but rather the great artists. In the 16th and 17th centuries, for example, the most original Catholic theologians were the artists Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475–1564), Raphael, Leonardo da Vinci, Titian, Caravaggio and Bernini.

To be sure, there were many talented, intelligent and erudite Catholic theologians in the 16th century: Thomas Cajetan, Francisco Suárez, Francisco de Vitoria, John of St. Thomas and others. Above all, there were the great mystical theologians John of the Cross, Teresa of Ávila and Ignatius Loyola. However, the outstanding Catholic theological work of that century was Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel ceiling (finished in 1512) and its later disruptive companion, his apocalyptic "Last Judgment" (finished in 1541) on the chapel's altar wall. He endowed these monumental works with complexity, plurality, synthetic power and a distinctly Catholic theological vision: incarnational, sacramental, metaphorical, analogical.

Michelangelo's theological vision of salvation is centered, as is all Christianity, on salvation through the event and person of Jesus Christ. His theology was also deeply influenced by his knowledge of the Old Testament. Hence the predominance of the Old Testament in the nine central

panels of the Sistine ceiling: the "Division of Light From Darkness"; the "Creation of the Sun and the Moon"; the "Separation of the Waters"; the "Creation of Adam"; the "Creation of Eve"; the "Fall and the Expulsion"; "Noah's Sacrifice"; the "Flood" and the "Drunkenness of Noah." Adjacent to these central panels are the famous "Ignudi," the restless, athletic, male nudes whose presence both highlights the influence of ancient Greece and Rome on Michelangelo and suggests the uncontainable energy of God the Creator in all creation.

In a dazzling plurality, every space of the ceiling is crowded with biblical images and classical figures. The corners feature more Old Testament scenes of miraculous salvation, prototypes for the story of Christ: "David and Goliath," "Judith and Holofernes," the "Punishment of Haman," the "Brazen Serpent." The lunettes and coves depict the ancestors of Christ in brilliant colors; the medallions feature historical scenes from the Books of Maccabees. Dominating the other figures are Michelangelo's monumental frescoes pairing seven Old Testament prophets with five Greek and Roman prophets, the Sibyls. Here the ancients unite to deepen Michelangelo's Catholic Renaissance theological vision and to convey Christianity's direct continuity with both Judaism and classical Greek and Roman culture. Michelangelo's religious-theological vision of Christian salvation was inclusive, not exclusive, both Catholic and catholic. Like most Christians of the period (for example, Martin Luther), Michelangelo interpreted Old



TOP: ***Evening Ensemble***, John Galliano for House of Dior, autumn/winter 2000-2001 haute couture.
BOTTOM: ***Statuary Vestment for the Virgin of El Rocío***, Yves Saint Laurent, ca. 1985.

Testament figures as prefigurations of New Testament figures. Christ, for Michelangelo, is implied in his paintings of Adam, Noah, Moses, the prophets and the ancestors of Christ; Eve is a prefiguration of Mary and the church. Analogies proliferate among the types and prototypes that fill the ceiling.

The Sistine ceiling expresses the central symbols of Catholic Christianity in all their complexity. Its central panels on creation convey a High Renaissance optimism and humanism, reflecting on the harmony of nature with grace, although more tragic notes of sin and grace appear in the images of the “Fall” and the “Expulsion of Adam and Eve,” as well as in the frightening, panic-riddled portrait of the “Flood.” Yet in all his scenes of the creation of the universe, Michelangelo’s key to understanding any classic is to follow the history of its reception in diverse cultures and periods or at different moments in one’s life.

For example, a number of Michelangelo’s contemporaries—including some popes, some theologians, a few fellow artists and one major satirist (the annoying Pietro Aretino)—objected to the many nude bodies in Michelangelo’s sculptures and frescoes. Adrian VI (reigned 1522–23) lashed out at the ceiling’s “stew of nudes,” while a later pope, the narrowminded rigorist Paul IV (reigned 1555–59), declared that Michelangelo’s “Last Judgment” belonged in a tavern or brothel, not the papal chapel. The wish to whitewash the whole fresco (fortunately a minority opinion among popes) was impeded by some wise papal advisers and by Michelan-

gelo’s international reputation. But shortly after Michelangelo’s death, yet another pope ordered a minor artist to paint loincloths on as many nudes as possible. Michelangelo’s critics failed to appreciate that the nude was an important aspect of his artistic and theological convictions. Even today, the ability to sculpt or paint the female or male nude body is one of the central ways for an artist to depict the movements, the tensions, the twisted rhythms and thereby the emotions of a distinct human figure.

Michelangelo’s nudes sprang from an even deeper source. Theologically, a soul cannot be painted as such—it is, after all, invisible—but the soul can be painted or sculpted as it manifests itself in a visible, ensouled body. On this topic as on so many others, Michelangelo had mainline Christian theological tradition behind him. The Gospel of John—the most spiritual, contemplative, even mystical of the four Gospels—begins, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). Christ became not spirit nor mind but flesh. In his “Last Judgment,” Michelangelo strongly affirms the traditional Christian belief in the resurrection of the body—not simply the immortality of the soul (as in Socrates). The human soul is an embodied soul; the human body is an ensouled body. Rarely has this philosophical (Aristotle) and theological (Thomas Aquinas) belief received so strong an artistic and theological expression as in Michelangelo’s sculptures, frescoes and drawings.

Even more complex to understand than the reception of a classic by a cul-



TOP: *Ensemble*, Viktor Horsting and Rolf Snoeren for Viktor & Rolf, autumn/winter 1999–2000 haute couture. BOTTOM: *Evening Dress*, Maria Grazia Chiuri and Pierpaolo Piccioli for Valentino, spring/summer 2014 haute couture.



Processional Cross
Byzantine, ca. 1000-1050.

Evening Dress
Gianni Versace,
autumn/winter 1997-98.



Ensemble
Domenico Dolce and Stefano Gabbana for
Dolce & Gabbana,
autumn/winter 2013-14.

**Fragment of a Floor Mosaic
with a Personification of Ktisis**
Byzantine, 500-550.



ture or an individual is the mystery of the creation of a classic. I tentatively suggest that the key to any classic's creation is paradoxical—namely, that the achievement of universality needs the intensification of an artist's deepest particularity. Was any 16th-century artist more insistent on realizing his singular vision than Michelangelo, who famously and ferociously defied his patrons? Yet only through such particularity did his masterworks gain a universality that increases with every passing century.

Michelangelo's theology is classically Catholic because it is both an analogical theology of creation-incarnation as anticipation of salvation as re-creation (as depicted in the Sistine ceiling) and a profound theology of the cross and of eschatology in the dialectical, sometimes violent imagery that saturates his "Last Judgment." These two monumental frescoes exist together somewhat uneasily in the same space, theologically clashing even as they complement each other. Christianity cannot in fact be understood if one ignores the beauty and goodness in all creation or the tragic elements of suffering, evil and sin in all life. That is the Catholic analogical imagination.

This essay is excerpted from Heavenly Bodies: Fashion and the Catholic Imagination, by Andrew Bolton, Barbara Drake Boehm, Marzia Cataldi Gallo, C. Griffith Mann, David Morgan, Gianfranco Cardinal Ravasi and David Tracy. Published by The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York © 2018. Reprinted by permission.

Rev. David Tracy is professor emeritus of Catholic studies at the University of Chicago and author of *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism*.

Meditation on Being

By Bibhu Padhi

*In the One unmoving that is faster than the mind,
that even the deities cannot reach, that, being still,
passes beyond others as they run, the Master
of Life establishes the waters.*

“Isa Upanishad,” Verse 4

You seem to know everything—
all that is yours, all that you do not
possess but long for, all the deeds
you’ve done, each apparently
through your own effort.
What you do not know is,
even before you put yourself
to a deed, it had already been done
by someone who prefers
to remain invisible to all of us.
You might not know, but even
the gods and goddesses are
a product of a humble hand’s
miraculous touch—
a hand that knows its business
to perfection, that moves
and yet is beyond any moving-force.
You, all of us, ignoramus as we are,
we invent our tricks to run ahead
of that fine hand’s touch.
I know how we are established
by a simple wave of that hand;
I know how our deeds progress
under its soft touch, just as
the sea’s green-grey-blue
is magically made out of
its one gentle sweep.
I know that kind, invisible hand;
I know that touch.

Bibhu Padhi’s 11th book of poetry, Sea Dreams, is due out in June. His poems have been published in The Poetry Review, The American Scholar, TriQuarterly and other reviews. His work has been collected in The HarperCollins Book of English Poetry and other anthologies.

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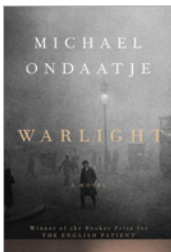
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Warlight blends elements of John LeCarre, Joseph Conrad and even Maurice Sendak.

Murky paths in wartime London

By Diane Scharper



Warlight

A novel

By Michael Ondaatje
Knopf, 287p \$26.95

Set in the waning days of World War II, Michael Ondaatje's seventh novel, *Warlight*, concerns two British children whose parents abandon them. At least, that is how it seems at first. But nothing is as it seems in this compelling story. The title, referring to the dimmed lights of London during its wartime blackouts, suggests the story's ambiance as well as its many hidden realities. As one character observes: "Your own story is just one, and perhaps not the important one. The self is not the important thing."

Ondaatje's Booker Prize-winning *The English Patient* mines similar territory. Both novels fuse the real and the invented. Both are atmospheric and poetic. In both the plot involves secret intelligence, smoldering battles and forged papers, as well as murder, mystery, love and adultery. But unlike

the 1992 book, *Warlight* focuses on children, as Ondaatje did in his 2012 novel, *The Cat's Table*.

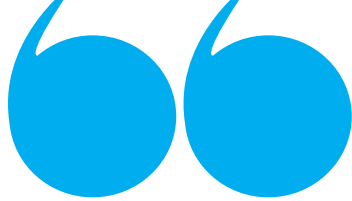
Setting, action and characters progress in a world that blends elements of John le Carré's *The Spy Who Came in From the Cold* with Joseph Conrad's *Typhoon* and even Maurice Sendak's children's picture book *In the Night Kitchen*. Besides the nightmarish quality shared by all four books, there is a shadowy side to the people involved. Many characters in *Warlight* have peculiar and intriguing pseudonyms that add to the mystery. Nathaniel Williams, who narrates the story, says, "Ours was a family with a habit for nicknames, which meant it was also a family of disguises."

Nathaniel, a.k.a. Stitch, is 14 in 1945 and will be 29 when the story ends. He and his 16-year-old sister, Rachel, a.k.a. Wren, are living in London when they learn their father has received a promotion and will be transferred to Singapore. Their mother, Rose, will follow him shortly thereafter. Nathaniel does not ask whether he and Rachel can accompany their parents. He just comments that the

idea isn't discussed, which draws the reader's attention and illustrates one of Ondaatje's techniques for generating suspense: Bring up the subject, drop it, bring it up later with a different twist, continue the pattern until the concluding pages suggest a resolution. As it turns out, there are reasons for leaving the children behind, yet since this is a mystery story, those reasons cannot be revealed without giving away the plot.

In the meantime, the children are cared for by eccentric strangers who seem kindly but have a criminal bent. Their given names are not revealed until later, so they are called by their pseudonyms: The Moth and The Pimlico Darter. Both men act fatherly toward Nathaniel and Rachel.

Nathaniel spends the next 10 years trying to learn what happened to his parents. But the process is difficult. As he puts it: "No one knows who the truth bearer is. People are not who or where we think they are." When, in his 20s, he researches national archives, he stumbles on facts concerning his mother and her childhood friend with the unusual name of Felon Marsh,



Most everyone in *Warlight* tends to disappear—and to reappear later. ●●

who worked as a spy during the war. Riding home on the train, Nathaniel daydreams those facts into a story that he blends with the “actual” narrative he is living and telling. The method, similar to one found in Ondaatje’s 1982 memoir, *Running in the Family*, is somewhat confusing initially.

Nathaniel compares his actions to researching a memoir, which adds to the narrative’s credibility. As Nathaniel sees it, Felon Marsh and his mother fell in love, although he is not sure whether anything ever came of it. He does have a fleeting thought that Felon may actually be his father. All of this leads him to wonder about truth and how it evolves: “By gathering together such unconfirmed fragments? Not only of my mother, but of Agnes, Rachel.... Will all of them who have remained incomplete and lost to me become clear and evident as I look back?”

Nathaniel also has adventures with The Moth and The Darter via a boat that travels the waterways by warlight. Once, when The Darter takes Nathaniel with him to pick up some greyhounds, the boy notices the poetry in place names, like “Lower Hope Reach” and “Tilbury Cut,” and recites them to himself, suggesting the poetry Ondaatje seeds into his writing.

At one point, Nathaniel meets and falls in love with Agnes Street, a teenage waitress and “woman of the street” with questionable morals but a good heart. Soon the two are romping naked in empty houses that are to be

sold—making sure to clean up afterward, since the woman’s brother is a real estate agent.

Then she disappears. This isn’t surprising, since most everyone in *Warlight* tends to disappear—and to reappear later. The one exception is Nathaniel’s father, who leaves the storyline when he travels to Singapore. Readers learn the father was damaged by the war but little else. In one instance, Nathaniel compares himself to Telemachus (son of Odysseus). In another instance, Nathaniel hears a tape and thinks he might be hearing his father’s voice—all to no avail. Since Nathaniel spends about 300 pages deciphering events in his mother’s life, it is disappointing that he seems to let go of his father’s story. (Interestingly, Ondaatje’s parents divorced when he was a boy, and he was not able to connect with his father after the marriage ended.)

Nathaniel does, however, eventually reconnect with Agnes, who is married to someone Nathaniel knew well and has a child, Pearl, who seems to be Nathaniel’s daughter. An allusion to Matthew’s parable about the pearl of great price, the name exemplifies Ondaatje’s penchant for puns and pseudonyms and subtly intimates the book’s path.

Several other religious references come up in passing. Nathaniel mentions abbeys, church bells, types of prayer and places where miracles occur. One allusion, though, is particularly memorable. It occurs as Nathan-

iel reads an inscription from William Blake on his mother’s tombstone: “I have travel’d thro’ Perils & Darkness not unlike a Champion.”

In Blake’s autobiography, he continues with “I still, and shall to eternity embrace Christianity, and adore Him who is the express image of God.”) These references, which seem to point to his mother, Viola, and her no-nonsense brand of Christianity, also allude to the dangers of wartime London as found in the title.

Ondaatje’s descriptions can be luminous:

This had continued even during the Blitz, when there was just warlight, the river dark save for one dimmed orange light on the bridges to mark the working arch for water traffic, a quiet signal in the midst of the bombing, and the barges ablaze, and shrapnel frapping across the water, while on the blackened roads the secret lorries crossed the city three or four times a night.

Ondaatje’s frequent use of figurative language and the characters’ philosophical observations both slow down and enrich the story, as does his poetic style. An award-winning poet, Ondaatje burnishes his words until they shine. Although his writing techniques can make for heavy-duty reading, they also add heft (and pleasure) as the storyline zigzags its hypnotic way from present to past and back again.

Diane Scharper is the author of several books, including *Reading Lips and Other Ways to Overcome a Disability*. She is a lecturer at the Johns Hopkins University Osher Institute.

Protecting the vulnerable

Helen M. Alvaré makes the case that law and governmental power should be put at the service of the most vulnerable members of our human community. A just society defends and protects its children from harms of all kinds. First in the line of defense of children should be the parents of each child, who have a legal and a natural responsibility to provide for the offspring they have created. However, the law and governmental agencies also play a role in making sure that the next generation has what it needs in order to flourish.

Alvaré argues that both public policy and all three branches of government have not acted justly in protecting the interests of children. This neglect is particularly onerous for

the children of the poor and children of color. In promoting what she calls “sexual expressionism,” public policy prioritizes the desires and autonomy of adults over the needs and vulnerability of children. Sexual expressionism reduces even the sexual partner himself, or more commonly herself, to a product in a capitalistic culture of consumption.

In making her argument, Alvaré does not appeal to religious faith or Catholic theology but rather to sociological research that points to the benefits to children of being raised by a married mother and father. As President Barack Obama pointed out, “We know the statistics—that children who grow up without a father are five times more likely to live in poverty and commit crime. They’re nine times more likely to drop out of schools, twenty

times more likely to end up in prison. They are more likely to have behavioral problems, or run away from home, or become teenage parents because the father wasn’t in the home. The foundations of our community are weaker because of it.”

Alvaré makes the case that sexual expressionism, at times funded by our own tax dollars, has exacerbated rather than alleviated the problems described by President Obama. She calls for progress in our advocacy for vulnerable children, including our law and public policy.

Christopher Kaczor is a professor of philosophy at Loyola Marymount University and the author of *The Seven Big Myths About the Catholic Church*.

Cartoon treatment

I am surprised at the way Ted Rall, a two-time winner of the Robert F. Kennedy Journalism Award, seems to cater to his audience when he pens a book. *Snowden* (2015) was his first biography in graphic novel form, and it portrayed its subject heroically to elicit easy endorsements from Noam Chomsky and Ralph Nader. Next came *Bernie* (2016), which began with Bernie Sanders on the campaign trail, then depicted how the Democratic Party had failed to demonstrate the need for him.

Now Rall has written *Francis*, and on the surface it is also a liberal easy-pleaser, describing itself in a bold headline on the back: “Finally, A Reason to Believe.” It begins with the papal election of March 2013. Then, a warning: “You have only to look at President

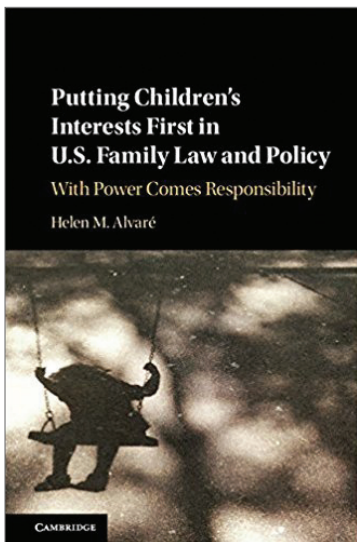
Obama to see what happens when soaring oratory fails to materialize in real terms that change people’s lives.” Catholic history and theology are challenged in Part 2, which Rall calls “Catechism.” This is where he explains but usually disputes Catholic teachings such as the primacy of Rome, the continuity of bishops since Peter and the theology of the sacrament of reconciliation. There are references to Holy Roman emperors, “The Sopranos,” and of course, Galileo.

Rall’s snapshot approach in word and image is slipshod, moving from modern popes to the pedophilia scandal to the Protestant Reformation. Then comes Vatican II; then “John Paul II—The Anti-Francis,” which is egregiously foolish. It seems that Rall sees all history, characters and events through a particular lens and is unable

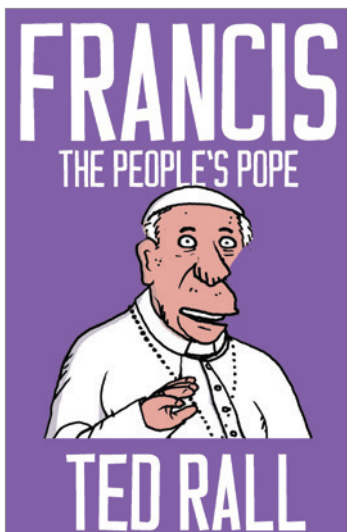
to focus attention on contexts. Rall champions heroes of the people at the expense of everyone else. He titles his section on the 2013 conclave “Redemption?” I am a fan of Pope Francis but found myself almost rooting against him.

Rall blends elements bizarrely (actor Alec Baldwin opining on guilt, then the Rev. Richard McBrien on the failings of John Paul II), until you realize his audience is predominantly those who receive their news from “The Daily Show” and do all their reading on a phone. I am troubled this book does not offer a more balanced treatment. I also don’t like how the cartoonist has made our pope look like Homer Simpson.

Jon M. Sweeney is a frequent contributor to *America*.



Putting Children's Interests First in U.S. Family Law and Policy
By Helen M. Alvaré
Cambridge University Press. 164p
\$110



Francis
The People's Pope
By Ted Rall
Seven Stories Press. 256p \$17.95

Race and memory

The jazz legend Louis Armstrong was born and raised in New Orleans. He honed his trumpet skills in the brass band halls and riverboats of the Crescent City. But in his old age, he expressed no interest in returning to his hometown; he is interred in Flushing, Queens. Gen. Robert E. Lee was a lifelong son of Virginia, who possibly—maybe—spent one night in New Orleans as a young man. And yet, in 1884 a bronze statue of the commander of the Confederate Army was hoisted onto a large column at a traffic circle connecting the residential neighborhoods of uptown New Orleans to the bustling business district downtown.

Her legendary native son—a black man, an invisible man—would not come home, but New Orleans offered monument after monument to the Cult of the Lost Cause. This dichotomy is the heart of Mayor Mitch Landrieu's meaningful reflections on race and memory in his book *In the Shadow of Statues*. In May 2018 Landrieu will step down as mayor after eight years steering New Orleans through the post-Katrina recovery. He oversaw substantial investments in public infrastructure and health care paired with unparalleled growth in the private sector. In the South, however, race tends to trump all.

Landrieu confronts clearly the likelihood that history will not forget his decision to remove four Confederate statues from city property. Two statues memorialized Confederate generals (Lee and P. G. T. Beauregard, a Louisiana native), a third the president of the Confederacy, Jefferson Davis. The final and most egregious statue memorialized the attack by the White

League, a paramilitary group, on city police and federal troops during Reconstruction.

Landrieu's push to remove these statues is told through the lens of the city's chronic inability to address race and poverty, clearly on view during Hurricane Katrina in August 2005. Landrieu's Catholic faith and Jesuit education fortify his moral case that racial reconciliation requires cultural hospitality as well as social justice. Public art is an expression of public love. How can a black New Orleanian walk every day past a statue that expresses public love for General Lee and feel at home? It is fitting that Landrieu makes this cultural case against racism in a city so renowned for its culture—a culture created and guided by the music, cuisine and spirit of black people.

Kyle Gautreau is a New Orleans-based political consultant and writer.



In the Shadow of Statues
A White Southerner Confronts History
By Mitch Landrieu
Viking. 240p \$25

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Searching for meaning in a world without consequence

By Amanda Haas

“Westworld,” now in its second season on HBO, is about a choose-your-own-adventure Wild West theme park, where wealthy visitors go to interact with humanoid robots—called “hosts”—who pose as citizens of a fictional town. In this world, sin has no consequences; visitors can kill, rape and maim with no repercussions because they are hurting only robots.

“Westworld” makes it clear that the robots are synthetic, metal, man-made, but it also calls into question what constitutes personhood. Dr. Ford (Anthony Hopkins), the creator of the the park, is able to program the hosts with a consciousness of sorts. An update in his code allows the hosts to remember bits and pieces of their past “lives.” (When they are killed or hurt by visitors, they are taken out of the park, reprogrammed and sent back out.) Suddenly, they can experience flashbacks, hold grudges and break from their pre-programmed

scripts. It is in their lies, deception and killing that the robots start to feel real, autonomous.

The first time the host Dolores lies, she tells one of the technicians that she would never hurt a living thing. But then the scene cuts to her sitting on her porch, swatting a fly from her neck. The reaction is unaffectedly human. This small act of rebellion shows Dolores’s first glimmer of sentience. The message is clear: Free will, the choice between whether or not we follow the path of our maker, is what makes us human.

“Westworld” not only shows how robots are humanlike, but how humans can become robotic. Humans often make the same predictable decisions, as if they were predetermined by nature. We give up our free will for the comfort of routine, the show suggests, and lose ourselves in the process. We stop questioning our purpose.

“Humans fancy that there’s some-

thing special about the way we perceive the world,” Dr. Ford says, “and yet we live in loops as tight and as closed as the hosts do, seldom questioning our choices, content, for the most part, to be told what to do next.”

Catholics are taught to answer ambiguous questions about what human life is and when it begins by erring on the side of caution. Life is too precious to risk. But in “Westworld,” the hosts’ deaths are not final. They die over and over again, rebuilt stronger each time. Can something be truly alive if it cannot die? Do the robots truly feel the pain of their deaths or merely mimic it frighteningly well?

Robots may be, at root, only a series of ones and zeroes. But then again, in our simplest form, humans are only a mass of cells. In the end, a being with the capacity for moral and rational thought is more than the sum of its parts. In the first season of “Westworld,” the robots gradually become more sympathetic

In “Westworld,” sin has no repercussions.

Grant Wood’s hymns to the heartland

“Grant Wood: American Gothic and Other Fables,” at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York through June 10, is the largest exhibition of the artist’s works ever mounted, with some 120 paintings, prints, lithographs, book illustrations and decorative objects.

The exhibition presents Wood’s best-known (if not necessarily best) painting, “American Gothic,” which was shown at the Art Institute of Chicago in 1930 and made him instantly famous. But look first, if you can, at “Woman With Plants” from 1929. It is Wood’s mother, Hattie, painted still in soft focus, holding a sansevieria plant and with, as her son said, a “bleak, far-away, timeless quality in her eyes.” (He read it as emblematic of Midwestern solidity, rootedness, perseverance. We see also, inevitably, something wounded.) And then stand before “Arnold Comes of Age (Portrait of Arnold Pyle)” from 1930, an affectionate but deeply melancholy image of his studio assistant and former student.

With these paintings in mind, the sharp edges and smooth surfaces of “American Gothic”—the well-known gaunt farmer with a (fairly savage) pitchfork and his daughter (almost certainly not his wife) beside him—are all the more striking. So is the carefully crafted, syncopated background—a house in the then-popular Carpenter Gothic style (decidedly off center), a red barn and geometric green trees. The girl, modeled on the artist’s sister Nan, wears the brooch from her mother’s portrait and stands slightly behind her father, modeled on Wood’s dentist. And the whole challenges the viewer to decide whether this is a study

of repression (as many early critics said) or of solid Midwestern virtues (as the painter himself insisted).

Does this exhibition retrieve Grant Wood as an artist greater than has been realized? Not really, though it is certainly spacious and sympathetic. Barbara Haskell is insightful in her assessment that Wood’s paintings are “primarily expressions of his inner life.” But it is hard to deny that many of the landscapes suffer from a kind of pneumatic sameness. We should be grateful, though, to see so fully and generously an artist who reminded Americans of much they could be proud of at an exceedingly difficult cultural and political time.

Leo J. O’Donovan, S.J., is president emeritus of Georgetown University and director of mission at Jesuit Refugee Service/USA.

than their human oppressors. Disenfranchised groups can see themselves in their dehumanization. Sexism, racism, homophobia, abortion and the eugenics movement all started with one group believing they were more human than another. When we reason away the rights of others, we lose a piece of our own humanity.

“Westworld” forces viewers to question their own definitions of what it means to be human and to reconsider their moral obligations. As the hosts rise up against their oppressors at the end of the first season, the viewer comes to realize that they may have been sentient long before they were able to defend themselves. Yet even if the robots do not feel the full pain of death, the humans still feel the full weight of killing.

Amanda Haas is a graduate of Loyola Marymount University’s School of Film and Television. She works for Jaunt, a virtual reality media company.



“American Gothic” is Grant Wood’s best-known painting.

Image: Whitney Museum of Art

Spirit of Christ

Readings: Acts 2:1-11, Ps 104, 1 Cor 12:3-13 or Gal 5:16-25, Jn 15:26-27; 16:12-15 or Jn 20:19-23

Early Christians inherited a complex understanding of the Spirit from their Jewish forebears. In its most basic form, the Spirit was divine breath that God shared with Adam (Gn 2:7) and all living beings (Gn 6:3). Every breath is a communion with the Spirit of God (Jb 27:3). With each breath the Spirit flooded the *nefesh*, a word we translate today as “soul” but that originally meant “throat.” In the throat, the Spirit passed into the blood, where it sustained life and movement. The Spirit remained in the blood even after death. When God said to Cain, “Your brother’s blood calls out to me from the ground,” he was referring to the Spirit within it (Gn 4:10). Kosher regulations forbid the consumption of blood or of animals with crushed throats because these practices profane the Spirit still within.

At times God could stir up the Spirit already in a person, or send a special outpouring of the Spirit to confer certain gifts. The Spirit gave Moses and the Israelite elders the wisdom to lead and judge Israel (Nm 11:17). The Spirit transformed Gideon’s fear into courage (Jgs 6:34). The Spirit conferred on David the strength to be king (1 Sm 16:3). The Spirit inspired prophets like Isaiah to speak words that comforted and challenged (Is 61:1). It was the vigor that strengthened unsteady hearts, the gentle whisper that guided minds to wisdom and the divine breath that stirred voices to speak God’s word.

Luke shows us this in the first Pentecost. The disciples in the upper room experienced a flash of insight amid signs and wonders. All at once, they understood Jesus’ mission and their part in it. Their first action was to speak, addressing all the nations gathered in Jerusalem, to whom they proclaimed the mission of Christ. They spoke with boldness, because in the Spirit they had now made that mission their own.

Writing at a later time, John looked deeper into the tradition. The Spirit Christians receive is not a one-time inspiration but a permanent indwelling of the Father’s presence. The divine intimacy that Jesus shared was now open to every Christian. “Everything the Father has is mine,” Jesus tells his disciples, and they will know how to continue

‘Everything that the Father has is mine; for this reason I told you that he will take from what is mine and declare it to you.’ (Jn 16:15)

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

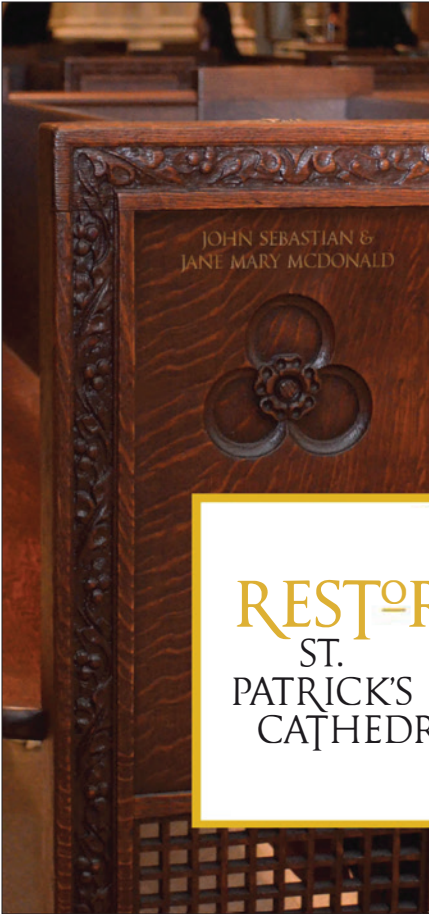
What practices help you encounter the Spirit within?

How has God stirred the Spirit in you to continue Jesus’ mission?

the Son’s mission because the Spirit “will take from what is mine and declare it to you” (Jn 16:15).

This guidance continues today. God’s Spirit flows through every heart; and at times, God stirs the Spirit in each person to advance the mission of the Son. These moments are exhilarating and disorienting; in them many feel a desire to live differently and finally discover themselves. The Spirit is at work in someone whose career change disrupts well-laid plans, in the teen who leaves behind childish things to pursue a life’s dream, in the retirees who pour new energy into community projects, in the widower who finds new love or in the pastoral minister who leaves her parish for work in an unknown place. In the community of Christ’s disciples, God’s Spirit is ever at work, transforming creation with new life.

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



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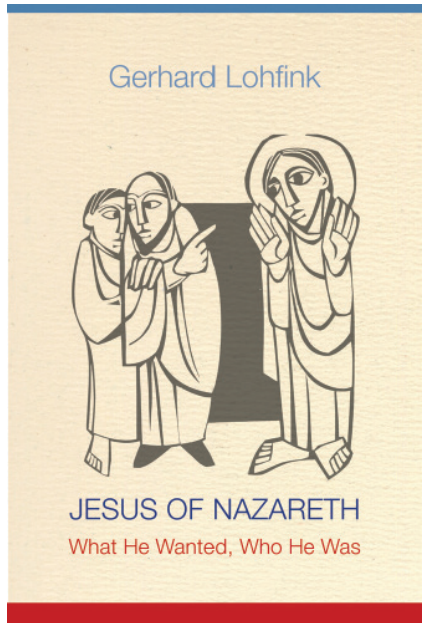
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Ever Ancient, Ever New

Readings: Dt 4:32-40, Ps 33, Rom 8:14-17, Mt 28:16-20

The distinctive beliefs of ancient Israel were rooted in ancient Near Eastern culture. The gods in this culture were “fluid” beings that could “distribute” themselves. In a way that some scholars compare to the Catholic “real presence,” gods could appear in many places and many forms simultaneously, without ever exhausting their power or individuality. Just as Catholics understand the eucharistic host to be entirely Christ without being the entirety of Christ, ancient Near Eastern worshippers understood their gods to be fully present in a variety of forms and places without ever limiting their individuality. Deities could “fragment” and appear in multiple temples and in celestial phenomena simultaneously, and they could “overlap” with statues, priests or prophets and render them temporarily a place where one could encounter the divine.

Certain passages in the Old Testament show that Israel shared these beliefs. The patriarchs built shrines wherever they encountered a divine “fragment,” as Jacob did at Bethel, for example (Gn 28:20-22). Furthermore, God could “overlap” with human beings to accomplish divine goals. Moses, Elijah and Elisha so consistently fulfilled the divine will that that Scripture calls each a “man of God.”

*‘Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.’
(Mt 28:19)*

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

How have you encountered the divine presence?

How does your life invite others to share God’s nature?

Later royal and priestly scribes who transmitted these narratives often downplayed traditions of distributed divine presence, fearing the idolatry they might inspire.

These traditions made a vigorous comeback in apocalyptic writings of the last centuries before Christ. Primary among these is Dn 7:13-14, which describes God granting a full share of his power and glory to “one like a son of man.” Several literary clues connect this Sunday’s Gospel reading with this passage. The earliest Semitic Christians believed Jesus to be the fulfillment of this passage. His divine sharing was so complete that he even outranked Moses and Elijah as a “man of God.” He was the “Son of God,” as the baptism and transfiguration narratives attest. Christians furthermore proclaimed that anyone could join Christ as a child of God if only they accepted his Spirit in baptism and followed his teachings, as the Gospel and second reading this Sunday affirm.

Greek Christians struggled to understand this tradition. Luke wrote the Book of Acts, in part, to explain to his Greek audience the effects of divine “overlap.” God’s Spirit transformed individual Christians like Stephen and Paul, while the Spirit’s presence in the Christian community made it an ongoing manifestation of God’s presence on earth (Acts 2:42-47). The Trinitarian controversies of Christianity’s first centuries represent the efforts of Greek scholars to understand how divinity could be distributed first among Father, Son and Spirit, and then among the Son’s disciples, who continued his mission.

We are God’s distributed bodies today. Our doctrine of the Trinity teaches that God wants to share his nature with us. When we live and love as the Gospel teaches, we reveal ourselves to be points of overlap between the heavenly and earthly realms. Staying close to the Gospel is no easy task; it will take most of us a lifetime of conversion and hope. The result, however, is that through us, others may hear God’s invitation to share the divine nature. Like the great saints, we will become bearers of the glory of God.

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

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Who Are the ‘Real’ Catholics?

A survey of women invites challenging questions

By Kerry Weber



One of the few qualifications for being a respondent to **America's** survey of U.S. Catholic women was seemingly a simple one: answer “yes” to the question, “Are you Catholic?” Indeed, the folks who answered our survey all said yes. But the rest of their answers varied widely.

We commissioned the **America** survey to offer a starting point for a new conversation about women in the life of the church. But the conversation, at least on Facebook and Twitter, often headed in a very specific direction: These people aren’t “real” Catholics, many argued, believing that the only answers that mattered were the ones offered by the 24 percent of Catholic women who attend Mass weekly or more. And yes, this data gives a very good overview of how this group of Catholic women thinks about and lives out their faith, which is extremely valuable.

Equally valuable, however, are the thoughts and opinions of the other 76 percent of women who replied, women who identify as Catholic but find themselves less involved in parish life. It is notable that despite looser connections to the faith, these women still consider themselves Catholic. Something made them hold on to that identity offered through baptism. And if we believe in the power of baptism and in the grace it offers, there can be nothing but “real” Catholics among those

who have been claimed for Christ through the “indelible spiritual sign” of this sacrament (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, No. 1274).

Of course, our baptism starts us on our spiritual journey, but it does not mean we will be perfect travelers. In the light of baptism, real Catholics are, quite simply, trying their best and sometimes—often—failing. Real Catholics keep trying. Catholics have a responsibility to grow in faith, but the catechism tells us that the Catholic community “bears some responsibility for the development and safeguarding of the grace given at Baptism” (No. 1255). To dismiss the experience of other Catholics as inauthentic is to shirk our own baptismal duty. We may have real frustrations with how others express our shared faith. But disagreement should not equal dismissal. We gain no followers for Christ by discounting others. We may gain some back by listening.

The key question, then, is not who the “real” Catholics are but rather: What real action can we take knowing that some of our brothers and sisters feel disengaged or apathetic or hurt or alienated by the church?

What we must strive to do as a community of faith is to make people feel at home—not comfortable, not complacent, not self-assured, but simply welcomed. It does not mean we cannot offer to each other

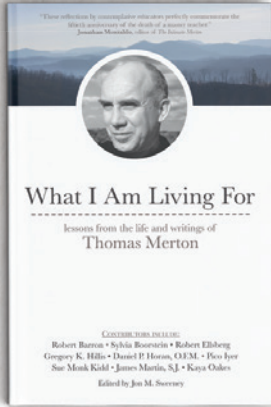
corrections or advice, but it does mean that we cannot say: What you feel does not matter.

And the people of our church, in the midst of the beauty and solidarity we offer, have too often caused each other great suffering. As in any relationship, that suffering may prompt a moment when some are tempted to leave the church, to wonder, “Is it worth it?”—or, worse perhaps, to stop wondering at all.

But the “prophetic and royal mission” Christians share by virtue of our baptism requires us to try as hard as humanly possible, while relying on the grace of God, to point each other to the reason to offer a definitive yes (No. 1268). Because, a million times over, it is worth it. Because the community, the communion, the commitment that the church provides point us, however imperfectly at times, to the God who knows our true worth, to the one who always says yes when we ask to come home, who welcomes us back, who offers a love that is always and forever real.

Kerry Weber, executive editor of **America**.
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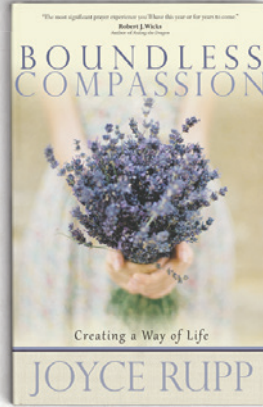


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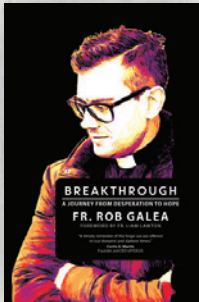
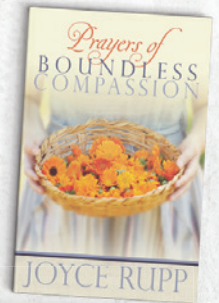
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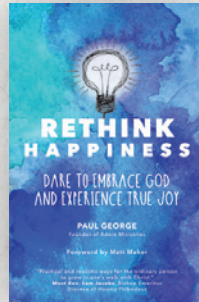
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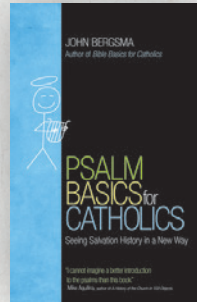
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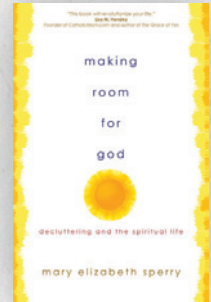
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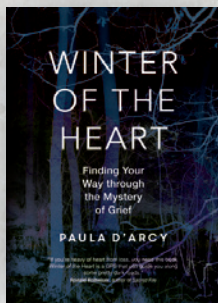
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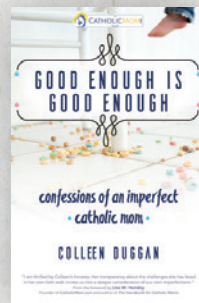
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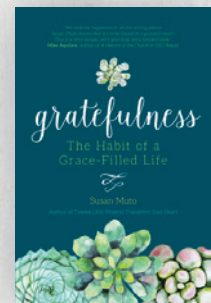
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