

America

MARCH 2, 2020

THE JESUIT REVIEW OF FAITH AND CULTURE

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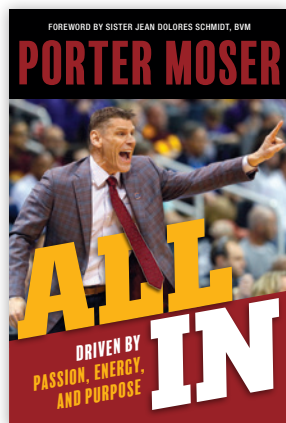


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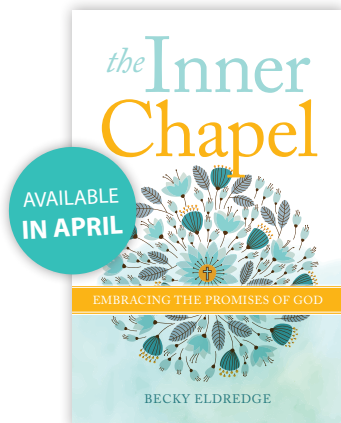


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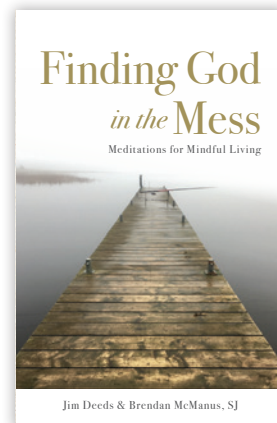
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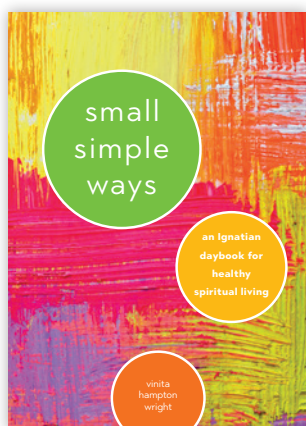
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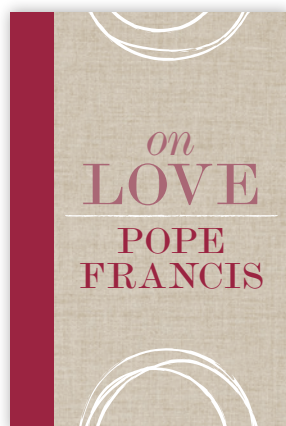
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It Tolls for Thee

On Feb. 8, 2020, Sgt. First Class Javier Gutierrez, of San Antonio, Tex., and Sgt. First Class Antonio Rodriguez, of Las Cruces, N.M., became the latest U.S. soldiers to die in Afghanistan. They were both 28 years old. Six other American personnel were wounded in the attack, which reportedly came as they were waiting for a helicopter transport in Nangarhar Province. Since the start of the war in 2001, more than 2,300 U.S. troops have died in Afghanistan and more than 20,000 have been wounded.

The war has been far costlier, of course, for Afghan civilians. According to Amnesty International, “in the first nine months of 2019 alone, more than 2,400 children were killed or injured in Afghanistan, making it the deadliest conflict in the world for children.”

You would think that these sobering statistics would keep the war at the forefront of our national consciousness. Instead, most of us hardly think about it. Philip Klay, a former U.S. Marine, described in these pages in 2018 how our mass indifference affected him when he came home from the war in Iraq: “To walk through a city like New York upon return from war, then, felt like witnessing a moral crime.... I was frustrated, coming home, that the American people did not embrace my vision of war.” Mr. Klay went on to explain how his “vision” of the war changed, but I think one could forgive any veteran for feeling what he felt.

It would be easy at this point to do what a thousand other columnists have done and spend the rest of these roughly 900 words castigating you for your indifference. It would be easy, but it would make me a hypocrite. The truth is, I am no different from

most Americans. In all probability, if there had never been a U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, the last 18 years of my life would have unfolded pretty much as they did. The war, the horror, the death and devastation have not disrupted my life in any meaningful way.

Which is why things like the exhibit I visited last weekend at the Museum of Modern Art’s satellite in Long Island City are so important. “Theater of Operations: The Gulf Wars 1991-2011” is a large-scale exhibition examining the legacies of those twin conflicts for the people who were most affected by them. It includes more than 300 works by artists based in Iraq and its diaspora. It is gritty, unpleasant, horrifying stuff—worth looking at precisely because it makes you want to look away.

The exhibition about the Persian Gulf war of 1991 also evoked memories of my college dorm room, where I huddled with friends around my black-and-white television set to watch the latest CNN report about Scud missiles, gas masks or burning oil fields. That war was the first major conflict of the 24-hour news cycle. In a time before streaming and smartphones, millions of us watched only war for those several weeks, our stamina fueled by a disturbing mixture of awe and excitement that made us feel alive—but, in retrospect, for all the wrong reasons.

The round-the-clock coverage also made us think we knew what was really happening. Yet despite the constant attention we paid to that first gulf war, the reality on the ground was and remains incomprehensible to us. While my friends and I thought we were immersed in reality, we were actually missing it, escaping it.

Today, reality is even more elusive. Our attention is dispersed across a billion screens and media platforms. We like to say that the digital revolution has made the world a smaller place, that it has annihilated distance. There are ways in which that is true. But technology has also increased the distance between us and those whose lives and livelihoods are literally being annihilated. We can choose to watch something else—and we often do.

The children of Afghanistan do not have that choice. Neither does the family of Sergeant Rodriguez, whose funeral was held in late February in Las Cruces. According to family and friends, Sergeant Rodriguez was an exemplary soldier, citizen and friend. He had deployed multiple times to Afghanistan, according to the *El Paso Times*: eight times with the 75th Ranger Regiment and twice with the 7th Special Forces Group. He is survived by his wife, Ronaleen, whom he married in April 2017, as well as his parents, two brothers and a sister.

In the meantime, AP reports, “Rodriguez’s funeral comes as the United States and the Taliban, the Islamic fundamentalist group waging war in Afghanistan, have reportedly reached some sort of truce, set to begin within the next few days.”

Let’s hope so. Let’s pray. But most of all, let’s pay attention. We owe at least that much to the children of Afghanistan and to the family of Sergeant Rodriguez.

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



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AP Photo/Andrew Harnik

Hank Schwirtz of Bettendorf, Iowa, tries to eat lunch as members of the media surround him to watch Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden on Jan. 6.

Cover image: Father Jacques Mourad distributes Communion at the Church of Deir Maryam in Iraqi Kurdistan.
(Photo: Cécile Massie).

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How Have Women Led You Closer to God?

To mark Women's History Month this March, we asked **America's** readers to tell us about the women who have inspired and shaped their Catholic faith.

My mother had a long-term illness and was often bedridden. She had a plaque on the wall that said, "God, there is nothing that will happen today that you and I can't handle together." A year or two before she died, I had a daughter who was diagnosed with Down syndrome and other problems. My daughter is now 44 years old and has had many medical problems. I always remember the plaque my mother had on the wall all those years ago, and I get a surge of strength.

Jean Roma

Cotuit, Mass.

My Irish-born mother, a devoted Catholic of simple faith, was my first teacher. Then came a series of Sisters of Mercy in elementary and high school. These women schooled me much as my mother did. Fortunately, I met two Sisters of Mercy in my adult years who had both grown far beyond those simple, rule-based years, who had a great influence on me. These were women the Second Vatican Council touched deeply, and once those floodgates were opened, there was no going back. Their friendship with my wife and family still exists.

Ray Smith

Niantic, Conn.

When we were children, my grandmother, who was ever so faithful, would remind us every time we had a stumble, a hurt, a bad day or injury to offer it up. She would teach us that pain and hurt are inevitable on this earth, but by giving it to God, our tiny suffering may serve a greater purpose and also help us to understand the sacrifice made by our Lord Jesus Christ.

Lisa Marie Hannon

Boise, Idaho

I was a senior in high school. The course was appropriately titled "The Bible." The teacher was Dr. Susan Mahan. I had never been taught by someone with a doctorate. I was immediately impressed. Here was a living breathing theologian. I knew after this course that I desired to dig deeper into my faith as an academic subject. I can remember our project on a woman of the Bible; I chose

Miriam. Everything about the course and Dr. Mahan's passion for the subject lit a fire within me. Today, I am a high school theology teacher, and I hope that I inspire my students the same way Dr. Mahan inspired me.

Catherine Mifsud Heller

Oakland, Calif.

I learned about the concept of God's unconditional love in theology courses, but the concept made sense to me and was easy to believe only because my recently departed mother loved me (and everyone) unconditionally. Saying that she was loving would be less accurate than saying she was love, the embodiment in our lives of the very love of God. Her witness to the love of God is the single most important influence on my faith.

Joe Holt

South Bend, Ind.

My dear, longtime friend kept me from leaving the church by her understanding ear and just offering a few words of direction so many times. My sister stimulates me to think about my faith at a level I would not reach without her help. My sisters in the Christ Renews His Parish program have helped me to get over my shyness and reach out to others in the church and outside and encouraged me to use my gifts. Women lift me up. And I now add Mother Mary to this list.

Angela Andrews

Bolingbrook, Ill.

My mother was a person of deep faith. I have also known a number of elderly religious sisters whose kindness and love have always helped me to know the Lord. They treated me in such a way that I could not help but know, as a young adult and now as a grown person, that I am a child of God. They took the time to listen. Others had such a love for young people that into their 80s they were still motivated to offer themselves in service to others. God bless them, for they did not waste their time on their aches and pains but focused on the person in front of them and the conversation that would lead that person to faith.

Mary Beth Weichbrodt

Livonia, Mich.

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A Republic, if We Can Keep It

The framers of the Constitution expected that the United States would have leaders who might not always place the national interest above their own. They planned to counteract “ambition,” as they named the self-interested drive to accumulate power, with ambition itself. In the *Federalist Papers* (No. 51), James Madison wrote that in order to avoid the concentration of power in a single branch of the government, “The interest of the man must be connected with the constitutional rights of the place.”

Madison described the design of separation of powers as “supplying, by opposite and rival interests, the defect of better motives.” In other words, the republic’s integrity depended upon elected officials being more interested in protecting the power of their branch of government than in protecting their partisan allies in other branches.

In the impeachment and trial of President Donald Trump, this design has failed. Institutional self-interest was insufficient to overcome partisan self-interest. A check on power that depended on rivalry between the legislature and the executive became merely a predictable contest of party loyalty between Democrats and Republicans.

The reality of partisan division should not, of course, determine the outcome of the impeachment process in either direction. In this case, the Republican-led Senate’s refusal to push any further into establishing the facts of Mr. Trump’s conduct and motives than the Democratic-led House investigation did, or could, leaves the substantive questions underlying impeachment in a state of suspended animation.

While Mr. Trump has been acquitted, he has not been convincingly exonerated. Nor have Americans been thoroughly convinced—as some Republican senators, accepting that the House managers proved the basic facts, have argued—that Mr. Trump’s conduct, while wrong, did not rise to the level of “high crimes and misdemeanors.”

Another interpretation of impeachment is that it functions as a sort of “super-censure,” the most powerful possible sanction the House of Representatives can deliver. Speaker Nancy Pelosi, responding to Mr. Trump’s acquittal, reiterated that he “has been impeached forever.”

Arguably, the impeachment and acquittal of President Clinton served such a purpose, marking his lying under oath as clearly wrong but not necessitating his removal from office. Yet Mr. Trump, despite members of his own party acknowledging that his actions crossed a line, has continued to assert, including in his speech following acquittal, that he did nothing wrong. He has maintained throughout that he was and remains justified in applying the pressure for investigations that led to his impeachment.

A Senate trial could still have served its necessary constitutional purpose while concluding in acquittal, but a trial determined in advance by partisan division fails to act as even a soft brake on presidential overreach. If the Senate is unwilling to assert its right to require documents, witness or answers from the president, expressions of discomfort with the president’s actions are not a sufficient replacement.

While the first article of impeachment, accusing Mr. Trump of abuse of

power in relation to Ukraine, received most of the attention in the trial, it is the second article, accusing him of obstruction of Congress, that presents the most serious, ongoing challenge to the American system of checks and balances.

If Mr. Trump does continue to use foreign policy to seek advantage in domestic political contests, it is at least possible that sunlight can serve as a disinfectant and that the combined threat of media scrutiny and House investigations can check his worst impulses in this regard. A debt of thanks is owed to the Foreign Service professionals and other officials whose testimony in the House investigation informed the country about these risks. Yet even if a repetition of the Ukraine affair is avoided, Mr. Trump’s manifest disdain for the concept of separation of powers still requires attention.

Mr. Trump refused to cooperate with the House impeachment inquiry and instructed administration officials that they enjoyed “absolute immunity” from congressional subpoenas. He has described the impeachment proceedings as a sham, a witch hunt and “constitutionally invalid.” He does not limit his assertions of power to refusal to be investigated; he has said that Article II of the Constitution gives him “the right to do whatever [he wants] as president.”

While it is difficult for any particular outrageous statement from Mr. Trump to surface above the rest, this one captures precisely what is so troubling about his presidency: He focuses on what justifies his actions and seems uninterested in understanding or abiding by any limits on his power.

Because Republicans command a majority in the Senate and party alle-

giance to Mr. Trump is nearly monolithic, Mr. Trump's grandiose visions of presidential authority have gone unchecked by this impeachment process. A trial more focused on the obstruction of Congress charge—which would have required different strategic decisions in the House about how to conduct its investigation and present its case in the Senate—might have done something to redress the balance of power between the executive and the legislature. That opportunity, sadly, has been lost.

Though he is particularly brazen about it, Mr. Trump is far from the first president to push for troubling expansions of executive power, and this is far from the first Congress to fail to curb that expansion. That trend was well established through the 20th century, and **America's** editors criticized both Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama for furthering it. While Mr. Trump is the current manifestation of this problem, that is no guarantee that a different president from a different party would attend to constitutional limits more responsibly.

The American political experiment seeks the common good not only by hoping for leaders who will prioritize it but also through a system of checks and balances to restrain and correct those leaders when they choose self-interest instead. As voters, the American people must seek the common good not only by determining which politicians to support but also by calling them to commit themselves more vigorously to the stewardship of the republic than to partisan purity.

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Transparency matters: a look at ProPublica's database of sexual abuse accusations

Transparency can be hard to look at.

On Jan. 28, the nonprofit news organization ProPublica published the names of the 5,800 priests and deacons who have been publicly identified by the bishops or superiors of 174 dioceses and religious orders as having had credible allegations of sexual abuse of a minor made against them in recent decades. In other words, ProPublica has created the only “List of Lists” of Catholic clergy abusers in the United States.

While no list of alleged and known offenders will ever be perfect, ProPublica's work provides abuse survivors with an important tool to help in their healing process. Seeing the name of their offender on such a list can provide confidence for people who have been afraid to come forward because they assumed that no one would believe their allegation. For some who have already reported their abuse, seeing the name of their offender on such a list can be affirming and bring a sense of peace. For others, these lists represent some small amount of justice and a type of accountability for their offenders.

The ProPublica list also provides a service in terms of public safety. Although its report indicates that over half of the men on its list are deceased, there are large numbers of living offenders who could represent a risk of future abuse. The list does not constitute a government-run sex-offender registry, but it does raise important questions about the men, such as their location, access to minors or vulnerable adults, and whether or not they can be realistically and properly supervised.

ProPublica readily notes that there may be omissions on its list. Al-

though it is an independent research organization, all of ProPublica's data has come directly from the dioceses and religious orders. ProPublica also notes that dioceses and religious orders do not use identical criteria for determining which men will be included on their respective lists. Despite these shortcomings, the importance of the ProPublica list to survivors, the faith community and the public cannot be overstated.

There are several reasons why dioceses and religious orders have been painfully slow in disclosing the names of abusers—reasons that primarily reflect concerns for the offender or the church rather than for abuse survivors or the faithful. In the past, a voluntary release of names was often criticized as a violation of the privacy of the offender, or as being fundamentally unjust to a man who was accused of abuse after he died. In some places, church attorneys warned that the release of names would give rise to an increased number of “false claims.”

Court orders to release the names of the accused, as well as settlement agreements that included policies to prevent further abuse, changed the landscape over time, but they did little to promote a national effort to be transparent. But in 2018, the Pennsylvania grand jury report, the increased interest in sexual abuse in the Catholic Church by law enforcement, and the revelations about the abuses committed by some popular and well-regarded church leaders caused many lay Catholics to urge bishops and superiors to disclose the names of credibly accused offenders. It became clear that retaining the trust of the faithful required true transparency, and transparency meant disclosing the names

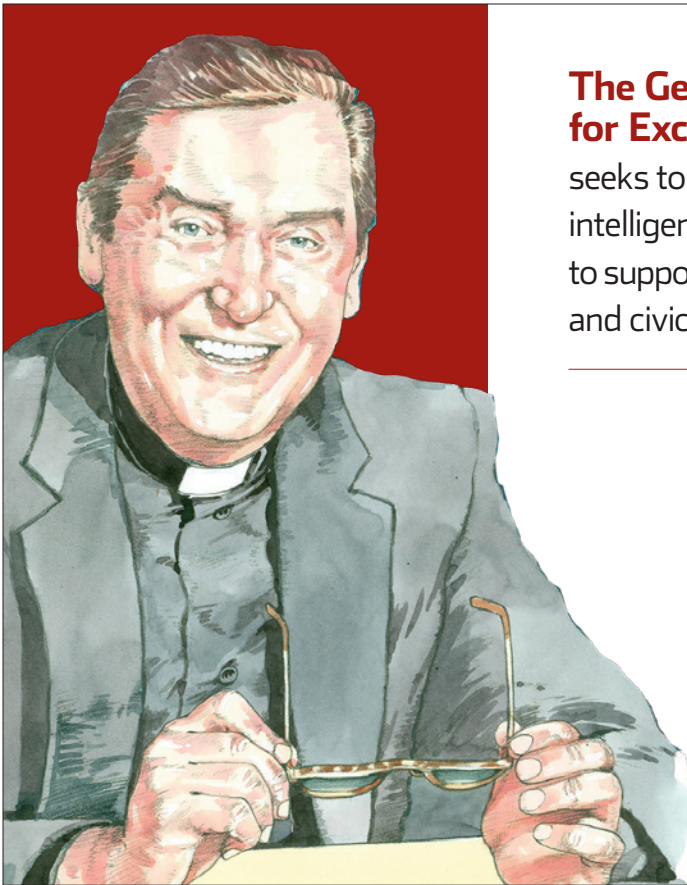
of abusers.

Will other disclosures now be made? Currently, there are several dioceses and religious orders that have announced their intent to publish or update a list of names after internal and/or external examinations of their records. But in some cases, dioceses and religious communities may lack the personnel or financial resources necessary to compile a comprehensive list of men with credible allegations. Others may be challenged by their antiquated, paper-based recordkeeping systems or a lack of archival expertise.

In 2015, I wrote in *America* that the debate about disclosing the names of clergy abusers had already persisted, shamefully, for over a decade. All of the 17,000 or more wounded boys, girls and young adults deserve to have their perpetrators named. But it is fair to say that this debate is coming to an end, and we can expect more disclosures and lists in the near future. Full transparency might even expand to include the names of all persons, clergy or lay, who have abused a minor or vulnerable adult while performing any type of Catholic ministry.

Transparency may be hard, but it is worth it.

Kathleen McChesney is a former executive director of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Office of Child and Youth Protection and a former F.B.I. executive. Dr. McChesney is the president of Kinsale Management Consulting, a firm that works with dioceses and religious communities regarding clergy misconduct and high-risk behaviors.



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Pope Francis' dreams for the Amazon

'Querida Amazonia' focuses on care of creation and justice for indigenous people

By Gerard O'Connell

CNS photo/Vatican Media

In his long-anticipated apostolic exhortation in response to the deliberations of the Synod of Bishops for the Pan-Amazonian Region (Oct. 6 to Oct. 27), Pope Francis, to the surprise of many, did not address the question of the ordination of mature married men to the priesthood or the idea of a women's diaconate. Instead, "Querida Amazonia" ("Beloved Amazon") was primarily a cry for justice for the region's 33 million people, of whom 2.5 million are indigenous peoples, and for the protection of their lives, cultures and lands and of the Amazon River and rainforests against the "crime and injustice" being perpetrated by powerful national and global economic interests.

He declared that the church must stand with the region's indigenous people but insisted that it must also bring the good news of salvation to them. Pope Francis emphasized the central importance of the Eucharist in building the church in the Amazon region but, at the same time, highlighted the disturbing fact that the Eucharist is not regularly available to many communities.

Some do not have the Eucharist for months or years, others not "for decades" because of the shortage of priests. Despite widespread expectations, however, the pope did not address the proposal for the priestly ordination of suit-

able and esteemed married men, known as *virii probati*, as part of a solution to this problem.

Archbishop José H. Gomez of Los Angeles, the president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, called the exhortation "a hopeful and challenging vision of the future of the Amazon region" in a statement released on Feb. 12. Noting the pope's reminder of the importance of evangelization in the region, Archbishop Gomez added: Pope Francis "also calls all of us in the Americas and throughout the West to examine our 'style of life' and to reflect on the consequences that our decisions have for the environment and for the poor."

Some who were hoping for a bolder response from the pope expressed frustration with the exhortation. Issues challenging the contemporary church are under a microscope in Europe as Germany began its "synodal way" in December.

According to the German Catholic news service, K.N.A., Thomas Sternberg, the president of the Central Committee of German Catholics, was disappointed by "the lack of courage to pursue real reforms." Agnes Wuckelt, the deputy chairwoman of the German Association of Catholic Women, called it "unbearable that the official church con-

tinues to deny women equal rights and degrades them to service providers due to biology.”

Aware of the vital importance of the Eucharist for building the church, Pope Francis appealed to the bishops of the region and Latin America to pray for vocations and encourage their priests to be more generous in offering to work in the Amazonian region. In a footnote (No. 132), he said, “In some countries of the Amazon basin, more missionaries go to Europe or the United States than remain to assist their own Vicariates in the Amazon region.”

The pope called for the promotion of the married male diaconate in the region (currently there are few deacons) and asked the region’s bishops to give a greater role and responsibility to the laity and especially to women. But he did not give an opening to the ordination of women deacons, arguing that he does not want to “clericalize” women’s role.

In an interview for America Media’s “Behind the Story” video series, Cardinal Michael Czerny, S.J., called the exhortation a love letter from the pope to the people of the Amazon region. The cardinal, who served as the special secretary of the Synod for the Amazon, said “Querida Amazonia” is meant to be reflected upon together with the final synod documents and their proposals for addressing challenges facing the church in the region. “The church in the Amazon, and indeed the church everywhere, is welcome and invited to consider all of the proposals,” he said, “so the ‘Querida Amazonia’ doesn’t resolve or close any of the questions.”

Pope Francis shared his thoughts about the synod results in his at times poetic exhortation, which the Vatican released on Feb. 12. He elaborated on “four great dreams”—social, cultural, ecological and ecclesial—that, he said, “the Amazon inspires in me.”

He said, “I dream of an Amazon region that fights for the rights of the poor, the original peoples and the least of our brothers and sisters, where their voices can be heard and their dignity advanced.” Here he comes down firmly on the side of the indigenous peoples. The region, he said, “is facing an ecological disaster,” and he insisted that “a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment.”

Francis said that “the businesses...which harm the Amazon and fail to respect the right of the original peoples to the land and its boundaries, and to self-determination and prior consent, should be called for what they are: injustice

and crime.” He adds, “We cannot allow globalization to become a new version of colonialism.”

He said that “colonization has not ended”; indeed, “in many places, it has been changed, disguised and concealed, while losing none of its contempt for the life of the poor and the fragility of the environment.”

Speaking of his second dream, “a cultural dream,” he said, “I dream of an Amazon region that can preserve its distinctive cultural riches, where the beauty of our humanity shines forth in so many varied ways.”

Francis said the important thing is “to promote the Amazon region...helping it to bring out the best in itself.” He recalled that the region is “host to many peoples and nationalities and over 110 indigenous peoples in voluntary isolation,” many of whom feel they are “the last bearers of a treasure doomed to disappear.”

Francis noted that “a consumerist vision of human beings, encouraged by the mechanisms of today’s globalized economy, has a leveling effect on cultures” and this especially affects the young. He urged the region’s young indigenous people to “take charge of your roots.”

Francis’ third dream is “ecological.” He said, “I dream of an Amazon region that can jealously preserve its overwhelming natural beauty and the superabundant life teeming in its rivers and forests.”

He recalled that “in a cultural reality like the Amazon region, where there is such a close relationship between human beings and nature, daily existence is always cosmic. Setting others free from forms of bondage surely involves caring for the environment and defending it but, even more, helping the human heart to be open with trust to the God who not only has created all that exists, but has also given us himself in Jesus Christ.”

In a forceful paragraph (No. 48), Francis states that “the equilibrium of our planet also depends on the health of the Amazon region.” Aware of the threat to the region from “the conquest and exploitation of resources,” he declared that “the interest of a few powerful industries should not be considered more important than the good of the Amazon region and of humanity as a whole.”

He emphasizes the urgent need to establish “a legal framework which can set clear boundaries and ensure the protection of ecosystems, otherwise the new power structures based on the techno-economic paradigm may overwhelm not only our politics, but also freedom and justice.”

Speaking of his fourth dream, “an ecclesial dream,” Francis revealed, “I dream of Christian communities capable of generous commitment, incarnate in the Amazon

region and giving the church new faces with Amazonian features.”

Given all the region’s problems, he said, “we can respond” with organizations, technical resources, political programs and so on, but “as Christians we cannot set aside the call to faith that we have received from the Gospel. In our desire to struggle side by side with everyone, we are not ashamed of Jesus Christ.”

Francis insisted that the Amazonian people “have a right to hear the Gospel, and above all that first proclamation, the kerygma.” But, he says, if the church is to grow in the region, “it needs to be able to engage increasingly in a necessary process of inculturation that rejects nothing of the goodness that already exists in Amazonian cultures but brings it to fulfilment in the light of the Gospel.”

Addressing the inculturation of the liturgy, Francis said, “Encountering God does not mean fleeing from this world or turning our back on nature”; rather, “it means that we can take up into the liturgy many elements proper to the experience of indigenous peoples in their contact with nature, and respect native forms of expression in song, dance, rituals, gestures and symbols.” He recalled that “the Second Vatican Council called for this effort to inculturate the liturgy among indigenous peoples; over fifty years have passed and we still have far to go along these lines.” Then, in a footnote (No. 120), he added, “The synod made a proposal to develop an Amazonian rite.”

Pope Francis reaffirmed that only an ordained priest can celebrate the Eucharist and administer the sacrament of reconciliation, but he called for “an inculturation of the ways we structure and carry out ecclesial ministries.”

“In the specific circumstances of the Amazon region, particularly in its forests and more remote places, a way must be found to ensure this priestly ministry,” he said. He called for the structure and content of priestly formation to be thoroughly revised, “so that priests can acquire the

attitudes and abilities demanded by dialogue with Amazonian cultures.”

He said this “requires the church to be open to the Spirit’s boldness, to trust in, and concretely to permit, the growth of a specific ecclesial culture that is distinctively lay.” Indeed, he asserted that the challenges in the Amazon region “demand of the church a special effort to be present at every level, and this can only be possible through the vigorous, broad and active involvement of the laity.”

Pope Francis devoted a section of the exhortation

to women. He recalled that in the Amazon region, “there are communities that have long preserved and handed on the faith even though no priest has come their way, even for decades.” He said this testimony “summons us to broaden our vision, lest we restrict our understanding of the church to her functional structures. Such a reductionism would lead us to believe that women would be granted a greater status and participation in the church only if they were admitted to Holy Orders. But that approach would in fact narrow our vision; it would lead us to clericalize women, diminish the great value of what they have already accomplished, and subtly make their indispensable contribution less effective.”

He said, “Women make their contribution to the church in a way that is properly theirs, by making present the tender strength of Mary, the Mother.”

He said the church must encourage the “emergence of other forms of service and charisms that are proper

to women and responsive to the specific needs of the peoples of the Amazon region.” And, so, “in a synodal church, those women who in fact have a central part to play in Amazonian communities should have access to positions, including ecclesial services, that do not entail Holy Orders and that can better signify the role that is theirs.”

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

FAST FACTS ABOUT THE AMAZON



The Amazon region’s 1.4 billion acres represent the world’s largest rainforest, about the size of the lower 48 United States. The region is on track to lose 27 percent of its forests by 2030.

One in 10 of all known species on Earth can be found there.

More than 100 billion tons of carbon are stored in the region’s forests—about 10 times the annual global carbon emissions from fossil fuels.

More than 80 percent of cleared areas in the Brazilian Amazon were opened up to create pasture for cattle. Soy bean and sugar production are among other drivers of deforestation.

Sources: World Economic Forum; World Wildlife Fund; The Coordinator of Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon Basin.



GOODNEWS: Teaching Guyanese children well—in their own languages

Wapichana school children in Guyana

Photos courtesy of Leah Casimero

Have you ever opened up a book that was written in a language you did not understand, using images you were completely unfamiliar with? Indigenous Guyanese children who live in the interior of the South American nation have this experience on most school days.

Over 90 percent of the population lives on the nation's Caribbean coast. For the 5 to 10 percent who do not, however, schooling begins under almost completely foreign circumstances. These students grow up speaking one of several different indigenous languages of the interior of Guyana—Macushi, Patamona, Wapichana—but when they begin school they encounter a system based on an English-language framework, using references to a culture and experiences they do not share.

The Quality Bilingual Education Program, supported by the Jesuits, is hoping to change early education for Guyana's indigenous youth. The new program, implemented in 2018, is still in a pilot stage. It has been adopted by three villages in the interior that have used the alternative curriculum for the first two years of primary school.

One of the coordinators of the program is Leah Casimero, a 27-year-old Wapichan woman. Ms. Casimero grew up in one of these small Wapichan villages and knows how difficult those first years at school can be.

Ms. Casimero said the program teaches Wapichan children “to respect [their] language, identity and prior experiences that [they bring] into school.”

Materials in the Quality Bilingual Education Program were created by a team of Wapichan artists and cultural experts in cooperation with the Guyanese Ministry of Education. But the alternative curriculum offers more than learning in the students' mother tongues.

“Our children already come knowing how to speak the language,” Ms. Casimero said. “But it is really more than that, it's everything. We're using the [indigenous] language

to teach. We're using the language as a tool to explain and learn concepts.”

Silvester Perry, a 41-year-old Wapichan man, is another coordinator of the program. He says that the experience of being cut off from their own language leads to low educational attainment among the Wapichan youth. According to Mr. Perry, who responded by email, a third of Wapichan children will not pass the entrance exam for Guyana's secondary schools. This combination of alienation from their own culture and lack of access to education can have disastrous long-term consequences.

Indigenous youth “go in search of paid employment, only to find themselves exploited in mining and logging camps in Guyana, or in domestic [service] and construction work in Brazil,” Mr. Perry said. Now he and Ms. Casimero are helping Wapichan children not only to achieve an education but to share the stories of the Wapichan people for generations to come.

“We need to prepare children for life, not just passing grade six exams,” Mr. Perry said. “Education has to work for our children so that we can contribute meaningfully to our community and our country.”

The program so far appears to be successful in the three communities in which it was introduced.

Brenda Pedro, the mother of a child attending the pilot program, said by email, “It's helping my child to retain her first language, revive her traditional culture and to read and write bilingually.” Ms. Pedro added that the children are also learning about their local ecosystem and traditional crafts.

“I think before, parents thought, ‘There's nothing I can do to help my child because I, myself, didn't have an education,’” Ms. Casimero said. “But with our program, people feel they can actually contribute something to the education of their child.”

Ian Peoples, S.J., editorial intern. Twitter: @IanPeoplesSJ.

A photograph showing a woman in a red t-shirt and blue jeans with rips, standing next to a young girl in a pink top and floral skirt. They are in a tent camp, with several tents visible in the background. The woman has her hand on the girl's back. The scene is outdoors, and the tents are made of various materials, including blue and orange tarps.

Asylum seekers trapped by Trump's 'Remain in Mexico' policy

In January 2019 the Trump administration began implementing the Migrant Protection Protocols, a new policy that empowered immigration officials to return thousands of asylum seekers to Mexico while their cases were being decided by the U.S. immigration court system. The Department of Homeland Security said the policy, known as Remain in Mexico, would address the escalating number of asylum claims.

In a way, it has done this, according to Dylan Corbett, executive director of the Hope Border Institute in El Paso, Tex. “Inflicting cruelty is the motive behind a policy like this,” he said. “It’s meant to be a deterrent.”

The D.H.S. announced on Jan. 29 that it was expanding the Remain in Mexico policy to include Brazilian nationals arriving at the southern border. D.H.S. called the policy a “cornerstone” of its efforts to “restore integrity to the U.S. immigration system.... Our nation is more secure because of the program.”

Of the 7,000 asylum cases that have been completed in the El Paso sector since the policy was implemented, Mr. Corbett said, only 15 individuals received asylum—a denial rate of more than 99 percent. Overall, immigration courts denied asylum at its highest rate ever last year, with 69 percent of asylum applications being turned down.

Ashley Feasley, director of policy at the Office of Mi-

gration Policy and Public Affairs of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, said tens of thousands have been waiting for their court date for months in “circumstances that are not sustainable.” On a trip in January to Matamoros, in the Mexican state of Tamaulipas, Ms. Feasley encountered pregnant women and sick children who “should not be subject to these kinds of conditions.”

Crowded shelters in Mexico have had problems with sanitation and have run out of space, leaving asylum seekers on the streets. That asylum seekers are willing to suffer through these situations is a testament to the sincerity of their cases, Ms. Feasley said.

“This is a blatant attempt to end access to asylum,” she said.

Norma Pimentel, M.J., the executive director of Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley in Brownsville, Tex., said that in Matamoros hundreds of families have been waiting for an average of eight months for a hearing. The decision to grant asylum often hinges on which judge hears the case, Sister Pimental said. Researchers at Syracuse University have found a number of judges with a denial rate above 90 percent.

Humanitarian groups on both sides of the border have been coordinating efforts to provide legal counsel and mental health care for asylum seekers waiting in camps, Sister



CNS photo/Henry Romero, Reuters

Central American migrants returned to Mexico in September 2019 outside their tent in Matamoros, Mexico.

Pimentel said. “These families shouldn’t be here,” she said of the camps in Mexico. “They are asylum seekers that should be given a fair, due process chance in the United States. They should be given the chance, with an attorney, to make their case. We need a new policy that is more humane and respects the dignity of every person.”

According to Ms. Feasley, it is increasingly difficult to draw attention to the camps. Many on Capitol Hill now think of the asylum seekers as Mexico’s problem, adding that politicians from both parties no longer see the border crisis as a pressing concern.

According to a study released by the Hope Border Institute, through the end of last year 60,000 asylum seekers had been returned to Mexico under the policy, 25 percent of them children. In Ciudad Juárez, migrants have been victims of robbery, assault, extortion, trafficking, kidnapping and murder. The city averages four murders per day, the highest number since 2011.

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



CNS photo/Karen Callaway, Catholic New World

Outside a home in Steele, Ala., in 2013

Pope Francis: A vibrant economy must put an end to poverty

Pope Francis called for “a new ethic” in the organization and management of the world’s economy when he addressed a high-level conference in the Vatican attended by the managing director of the International Monetary Fund, the president of the World Bank, heads of multilateral institutions, government ministers and well-known economists, including many from Latin America. A one-day conference at the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences brought together economists and government officials from around the world.

“The world is rich,” but the number of “poor people around us is increasing,” the pope told the international gathering on Feb. 5. He said that “hundreds of millions of people are living in extreme poverty, lacking the bare necessities of life including food, medical care, schools, drinking water.”

Five million minors “will die this year due to poverty,” Pope Francis said, and another 260 million are without education due to lack of resources, wars and migration, while millions more are victims of human trafficking or new forms of slavery. This situation is “a call for action, not a motive for despair,” he said. “We are not condemned to universal inequality.”

Pope Francis identified the problem as “the lack of will and decision to change things, and especially [to change] the priorities.” But, he said, “a rich world and a vibrant economy can and must put an end to poverty.”

Alongside “the globalization of indifference,” he said, there are what St. John Paul II called “the structures of sin,” which contribute to the suffering by hiding resources. He noted that every year “thousands of millions of dollars” that should be used to finance medical care and education are deposited in tax havens, preventing governments from providing proper development for their people.

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

A photograph of a man with a shaved head, wearing a dark long-sleeved shirt and light-colored trousers, sitting on a yellow plastic chair. He is looking to his right, holding a small golden cup in his right hand. The background is a weathered, light-colored wall with some graffiti and a decorative metal door frame to the right.

THE PRIEST WHO STAYED

In the face of torture and destruction, Father Jacques Mourad has remained devoted to the people he serves and to his faith.

By Stephanie Saldaña

It became clear that I would need to follow the Rev. Jacques Mourad around all day. To the kitchen, where he was preparing kebab with eggplants or demonstrating how to cut onions just so or washing dishes. To the chapel, where he was picking away wax collecting on candle holders. To the classrooms, where he was nodding his head as nuns from India attempted to recite the Mass in Arabic that he has spent months teaching them. To the door, which he was always leaning out of, calling to someone in the street.

There was nothing too small, or nothing small enough, to occupy Father Jacques, for he believed that God was captured best in simplicity. The woman called by name. The prayer in the chapel, where only two of us had gathered beneath the rising Iraqi sunlight. The coffee filled exactly to the correct level.

We are in the upstairs classroom, where he is seated at the head of a table, reciting the Mass in the Chaldean rite from a prayer book, carefully pronouncing the words in Arabic and Aramaic, waiting as the nuns recite them in



Credit: Cecile Massie

Father Jacques Mourad (right) visits with parishioners at their home in Kurdistan, Iraq. They were displaced from their home in Qaraqosh by ISIS.

return. He pauses, flustered. The translation from Arabic to English that they have been consulting is not accurate. The word *hanan* has been translated as “to pity.”

“No,” he says. “It should not be that the Lord has pity on us. The meaning is closer to *tendresse*. Tenderness.”

“This is important,” he insists. “The Lord doesn’t have pity on us from a distance. He is close to us, in his tenderness.”

This is not the way I expected to begin the story of a Syrian priest kidnapped by ISIS during Syria’s civil war, tortured and held in prison for five months before escaping and forgiving his captors. What do onions mean in the scale of such a story? I had traveled to Iraq to hear more about how this man had survived, a Catholic priest rescued by his Muslim friend. He would tell me that story, too. But in the meantime, he wanted me to learn about chopping onions.

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I first met Father Jacques in 2004, when I was a student in Syria. I often visited the monastery of Mar Musa, where he was a member of al-Khalil, a monastic community of monks and nuns dedicated to dialogue with Islam. I, like many others, journeyed there in large part to speak with the community’s charismatic founder, Paolo Dall’Oglio, S.J. At the time, Father Jacques was restoring the monastery of Mar Elian, in the village of Qaryatayn an hour away, and so he was rarely present; but sometimes he visited to cover the Mass when Father Paolo was gone. He sang beautifully, and for years when I tried to summon memories of him, I would hear the echo of his voice in Aramaic: *Qadishat aloho*.

I do not remember talking with him. I never visited his monastery. Father Jacques did not ask to be noticed, and so I did not notice him.

I came to know Father Jacques later, through stories I heard about him during the war of thousands of Muslims and Christians seeking safety in his monastery as their villages were bombed. By then, Father Paolo had been kidnapped. So, too, the Bishops Boulos Yazigi and Gregorious Yohanna Ibrahim. The Jesuit father Frans van der Lugt had been killed on his doorstep in Homs.

Father Jacques had stayed. When Europeans sent him money to restore the houses of his Christian parishioners, he rebuilt the houses of Muslims, too. He remained when Father Paolo disappeared. He refused to leave when ISIS invaded Palmyra. He stayed with the neighbors he loved, until he, too, was taken.

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Now it is November 2019, and Father Jacques and I are

sitting in a corner of a church at the monastery of Maryam al-Adhra in Sulaimaniya, where he has been living since 2016. A picture of Father Paolo, who remains missing, has been placed nearby with a candle. The Iraqi sunlight is streaming through the windows. It is time to talk. We will continue, in long stretches, for a week.

Our story begins 100 years before, with another man named Jacques Mourad—his grandfather. That Jacques had lived in the Syrian Orthodox Christian community of Mardin, in southeastern Turkey. In 1915 he, along with hundreds of thousands of other Christians, fled to escape the genocide that would be known in Syriac tradition as the *Seyfo*. His family separated, and our Father Jacques’s grandfather arrived in what is now Syria. He quarreled with the Orthodox bishop and became Catholic. So it was that the boy who would become Father Jacques Mourad was born in Aleppo, Syria, in 1968, a member of the Syriac Catholic Church, to a family rooted in the liturgical richness but also the wounds of Syriac Christianity. Since boyhood, Jacques knew that the story of what had happened to his family was more complicated than some would tell. “It’s true that members of my family were killed by Ottomans who happened to be Muslims,” he tells me. “But when they fled to Aleppo and Jazira—they were saved by inhabitants who were Muslims and Christians both.”

People could kill, but they were also able to save. From then on, whenever Father Jacques refers to the last Christian communities in the Middle East, he calls them by a phrase that, in Arabic, sounds like “the remains of the remains.” It will take time before I understand that he is calling them “the remnants.”

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Father Jacques’s faith was forged in Aleppo’s diversity. His parents were his “first church,” and he remembers watching his mother murmur the name of Jesus as she cleaned the house, selling her jewelry so that he could afford to attend the Armenian Catholic School. When he walked to class each morning, he would duck into churches left open on the way to light candles. And so that became for Father Jacques the image of the church and later of the very heart of God—a door that always remains open.

He was astonished by the life in Aleppo’s churches. As a boy, his father would take him by the hand on Sunday mornings, and he would serve the different Catholic Masses: Syriac, Armenian, Greek, Chaldean, Roman Catholic, Maronite. He waited with anticipation to open the tabernacle, amazed that God—who was so great—became small so that he might



Credit: Stephanie Saldana

partake in him.

He was drawn to a sentence from the Psalms inscribed on the pillar of his church at school: Lord, I love the house where you dwell, the place where your glory resides.

He wondered how a church that had suffered so much pain, over so many centuries, could remain so alive.

“How did the church remain alive?” I ask him.

“From its faith,” he answers.

“And where did this faith come from?”

“This faith comes from this pain.”

“As Christians, we are called to build the kingdom,” he continues, “All of us. However this kingdom cannot be built except by taking up the cross. When Jesus said: ‘Blessed are you when people persecute you and curse you and say all kinds of evil things against you,’ Jesus did not lie to us. That’s because he knows the situation of the world. But at the same time, he was saying, ‘Repent—the kingdom of God is near.’”

Every morning, Father Jacques turns toward the East. Lord, Jesus Christ, have mercy on me, a sinner, he prays—the prayer of the heart. The East symbolizes hope, and the Christians of the East collectively turn to it in joy and expectation. That is why ancient churches built their altars facing east. That active waiting is the life he felt in the church when he entered as a boy.

“We are partners in building the kingdom,” he tells me. “We are responsible to work for achieving it every day in our lives. We shouldn’t just wait for it to descend from the heavens. In that spirit there are many things in our life that take another dimension. When I have a responsibility in building the kingdom, then I must start from where I am.”

“The church is not a place,” he says. “It is a community on a journey.”

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Called to the priesthood, Father Jacques was 18 years old when he moved to Lebanon to study theology. When some

teachers in his seminary voiced sympathy toward Christian militias fighting in the Lebanese Civil War, he felt betrayed. Surely, they had misunderstood the mystery of why Jesus had offered himself on the cross. Jesus was the victim, not the oppressor.

During those years, he traveled for the first time to the sixth-century monastery of Mar Musa in Syria, where he met Father Paolo Dall’Oglio, an Italian Jesuit fluent in Arabic, who had also been ordained in the Syriac Catholic rite and had begun a project of restoration. The monastery lay high on a cliff and could be entered through a narrow door opening into a courtyard taking in a view of the desert. Father Jacques was enchanted—by the monastery and its ancient frescoes and by Father Paolo. He wrote in his memoir, “I was created to live in this place.”

Jacques stayed, and he and Father Paolo became a community of two. He read the lives of the desert fathers and the writings of Charles de Foucauld, who had written of the “hidden life” of Jesus of Nazareth, who for 30 years had lived largely unnoticed. Those unseen moments in Jesus’ life were also incarnation, leading to the cross and resurrection. Father Jacques studied the monks who abandoned their lives to God alone. For that first year, he wondered if he and Father Paolo would remain alone. Would anyone join them?

Visitors often climbed the steps up the mountainside, and Father Jacques would welcome each with a glass of water or tea, practicing the hospitality of the desert. He felt that people retreated there to remember who they were. He thought back to the words of Jesus to the Samaritan woman: “With the water I give you, you will no longer thirst.” Deir Mar Musa was offering living water, a place where Syrians could reconnect to the goodness within them, meeting God “without checkpoints.”

A community of monks and nuns began to gather, and Father Paolo named them al-Khalil, the name given to Abra-

Prison taught Father Jacques to recognize the image of God in everyone.

ham, the friend of God, who welcomed strangers. Still, Father Jacques's relationship with Father Paolo was not easy. Father Paolo was inspired by the theology of Louis Massignon, the French Catholic scholar of Islam, and he restored the monastery to initiate a project of interreligious dialogue. The monks and nuns took vows of hospitality, expected to welcome Muslims as guests sent by God. Father Jacques, who carried the wounds of his family's past, felt that Father Paolo, a European, did not appreciate how difficult the relationship between Muslims and Christians in Syria really was.

In truth, growing up, Jacques had barely known any Muslims. There had been only two in his class at school. His professors in seminary had often spoken harshly about Islam. At Mar Musa, he began to meet Muslims for the first time from nearby villages: the bread vendor, the ice cream seller, the workers restoring the monastery. Each one was kind.

But when a Muslim in the nearby village of Yabroud killed a Christian in a fight between families, Father Jacques became furious. Father Paolo remained silent.

Later, Father Jacques would reflect on Father Paolo's wisdom: "He knew very well what Christians are called to. As for me, I didn't know yet." He felt himself living a paradox, torn between the rejection of those outside of his faith and the awakening to a spiritual journey, asking him to open his heart to the Other. Deeply, he knew that it made no sense for a disciple of Jesus to hate.

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In 1996, Father Jacques visited the village of Qaryatayn, southeast of Homs, for the feast of Mar Elian, a saint the locals revered. He knew nothing of the saint and was surprised to encounter thousands of Muslims and Christians at the tomb, who told him stories of miracles they had experienced through Mar Elian's intercession. "How is it," he thought, "that we have not done more to care for this place?"

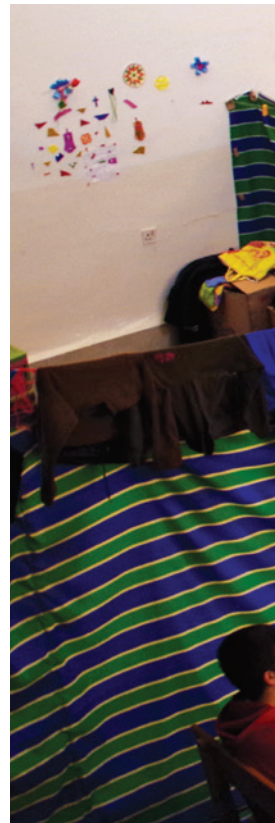
In 2000, the bishop asked Father Paolo if the community

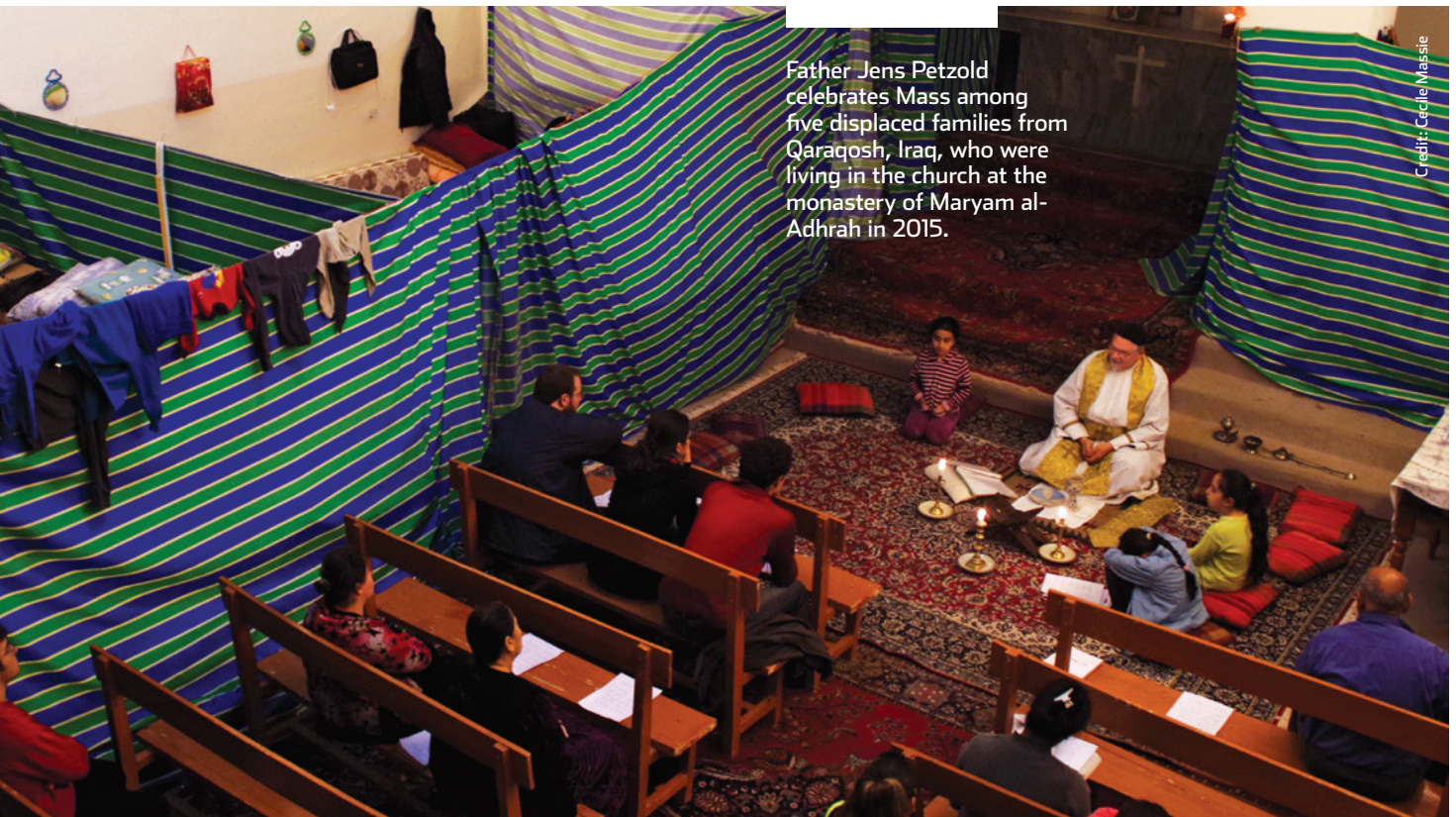
would assume responsibility for Mar Elian. He proposed that Jacques should restore the ancient monastery. Jacques had not forgotten the power of his initial encounter, and yet he had no desire to leave Mar Musa. "I didn't know—did God want this?" he asked. He decided to try.

On his first day in Qaryatayn, he entered a shop to buy supplies for restoring three rooms around the monastery. The owner, who was Muslim, asked Jacques what the materials were for and was surprised to learn that this man, covered with dirt, was the new village priest. Jacques told him that the tools were to restore the monastery of Mar Elian, whom the Muslims called Ahmed al-Houri. The shopkeeper refused to let Father Jacques pay. He sent his son to lead him to the blacksmith, who might forge other tools. Jacques was astonished by this stranger's generosity. He took it as a sign.

The population of Qaryatayn was largely Sunni Muslim, with a small community of Christians; half Syrian Catholic, half Syrian Orthodox. All of the residents—Muslim, Catholic and Orthodox alike—visited the tomb of Mar Elian to pay their respects to the saint, or wali, as the Muslims called holy men, who they believed protected them. Over time, Father Jacques worked with the villagers to restore the monastery around the tomb with ancient stones, and together they planted over 1,000 trees. His Muslim neighbors invited him to celebrate their feasts and lined up in the monastery salon to extend their greetings on Easter. Jacques witnessed "a kindness from within them that emanated from their own faith." In the middle of the desert, the monastery became an oasis, a sign of hope. "I saw that people were no longer thinking of moving away," he told me. "And the reason was simple: They were seeing the trees that we planted around the monastery growing tall."

Every Sunday morning, Father Jacques visited his friend, the Syrian Orthodox priest Abouna Barsoum, and they sat for an hour and a half before Father Jacques rang the bells for Mass. Father Barsoum was preparing bread for the Eucharist. When he finished, Father Jacques took from those hosts to use in his own Mass. They knew it was the same body of Christ on the altars of both of their churches—Orthodox and Catholic. By this, Father Jacques was reminded that he was not only the priest of the Catholics but Abouna, meaning "our Father," to all of the Christians of Qaryatayn.





Father Jens Petzold celebrates Mass among five displaced families from Qaraqosh, Iraq, who were living in the church at the monastery of Maryam al-Adhrah in 2015.

Credit: Cécile Maesie

In the beginning, the Muslims of the village called Father Jacques Ya Muhtaram, “Oh respected One,” but in time they also began to call him Abouna, until he began to think of that, and not Jacques, as his real name. As a father to everyone, Christians and Muslims, he began to understand that he could not love one child more than another. His heart was healed, and he saw that God does not love any person more than another, neither Christian nor Muslim, that all of us are dear to God’s heart. Father Jacques kept the monastery open. He noticed that the villagers, Muslim and Christian, kept the doors to their homes open. They taught him that a door that is open leads to a heart that is open, ready to receive whomever is sent.

He prayed with Paul’s Letter to the Philippians, meditating on incarnation; God’s decision to empty himself out to become a servant. “Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus.”

If God loves all of his people the same, then he—Jacques—must learn to love them that way, too.

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In 2012, on the Muslim feast of Eid al-Adha, Father Jacques was holding a camp for 80 children from the local parish when a battle broke out between government forces and members of the opposition in the streets outside.

Father Jacques gathered the children into the hall, and they sang until their voices drowned out the din of bullets.

“Love and life will always prevail,” he tells me, “if hu-

man beings desire it.”

War had arrived. Jacques kept the monastery open, with one rule: No weapons inside. He instructed his parishioners not to take up arms.

Every week, Jacques met with sheikhs to strategize ways to help the villagers—their friendship, he believed, was “the real revolution that we lived in Qaryatayn.” Thousands of Syrians fled surrounding villages and stayed around the monastery, trusting it as a safe space, believing that they were protected by St. Elian.

•••

Father Paolo had been expelled from Syria in 2012 for his outspoken criticism of the government. In July 2013, he crossed back in and traveled to Raqqa, presumably to negotiate the release of hostages with a group calling itself the Islamic State. He disappeared. Father Jacques barely had time to absorb the news. Thousands of Syrians were camping around his monastery, and he was trying to negotiate a local ceasefire.

Two months passed with no news. Father Jacques began to feel Father Paolo’s absence. They had shared their lives for more than 20 years, and despite or maybe because of their disagreements, he considered Father Paolo his “closest friend until the end.”

There were moments he considered to be miracles, and he wondered if Father Paolo’s self-offering was responsible. When food ran out in Qaryatayn, a truck from the Jesuit



Refugee Service arrived, loaded with provisions. Others sent money allowing him to rebuild the houses of Christian and Muslim families.

As violence escalated, the monastic community in Mar Musa briefly fled the monastery for safety. Yet not a single rocket fell on it, and no faction took it over. The door remained open, an image of God’s heart. Even when the monks and nuns escaped, two men stayed behind to protect it. One was a Muslim worker.

“Why did he stay?” I ask.

“He had built the women’s monastery of al-Hayek with his own hands,” Father Jacques tells me. “It was his second home.”

•••

On May 20, 2015, ISIS took control of Palmyra. The next day, they kidnapped Father Jacques in Qaryatayn, along with a young Christian man named Boutros, and took them to Raqqa.

I have no desire to ask Jacques about his five months in prison. He described them in his book *Un Moine en Otage*, written with the French journalist Amaury Guillem and published in 2018. I know about the psychological torture. The near execution. I have not come here to ask him to relive his trauma.

But there are some things Father Jacques wants to make sure I understand.

He wants me to know that he prayed the prayer of the heart in prison, the prayer that he had seen on his mother’s

lips when he was a boy, murmured while she was doing the housework.

He wants me to know that when a member of ISIS put a knife to his throat and counted to 10, Jacques cried out, “Lord, have mercy on me!” The man fled the room. Jacques felt certain that God had intervened in the heart of that man, his cry reminding him that God exists.

He wants me to know that when he was beaten by his captors, he was granted the vision of Jesus, flagellated, so that he could say in his heart, “With your pains, O Jesus,” even if he did not deserve that. How could he feel anything but gratitude, both for the gift of Christ’s presence and for the man whose violence failed to overcome him?

He wants me to know that prison taught him to recognize the image of God in everyone. Even if a man is carrying weapons, this does not obscure the image of God within him.

“You were able to see the image of God, even in the man who tortured you?” I ask.

He struggles with my question. “No,” he admits. “Because when a man comes to torture you, you do not see anything. You close yourself in on your own pain in order to protect yourself.” He wraps his arms around his chest, leaning forward, to show me what he means.

It was only later that he was able to look again, at that same man, and recognize it.



1. Father Jacques shares a meal with friends at the monastery of Maryam al-Adhrah in Sulaimaniya, Iraq, where he settled after he left Syria.
2. A young boy serves Mass at Mariam al-adhrah in Sulaimaniya, Iraq.
3. The monastery of Mar Elian in Qaryatein, Syria, as it looked after it was restored by Father Jacques, before it was ravaged by ISIS.
4. Mass is celebrated at the monastery of Maryam al-Adhrah in Sulaimaniya, Iraq.
5. Local Kurdish schoolchildren visit the monastery of Maryam al-Adrah to learn about the history of Christianity in their city.

Credit: Stephanie Saldaña

•••

There is one last thing. I cannot forget a vivid scene in his memoir. In the middle of the night in prison, the words to the Taizé song “Nada Te Turbe” had come to him. Until then, he had only heard the song, taken from a text by St. Theresa of Avila, in Spanish, a language that he does not speak. He received those words in Arabic as a miracle. God was with him, just as he was with Christ, on the cross, who called out: Forgive them Father, for they know not what they do!

I ask Father Jacques to sing it for me in Arabic, which channeled the essence, if not the exact wording of the song’s original Spanish. He closes his eyes:

Let nothing worry you
 Let nothing make you fearful
 God is with you
 And so evil shall not come close to you
 Let nothing worry you
 Let nothing make you fearful
 God alone suffices

•••


Everything is incarnation. This is what Father Jacques wants me to understand. His mother’s prayers while cleaning. That pillar in his childhood church: Lord, I love the house where your glory resides. Father Paolo. The desert, where he met God alone. All those who called him Abouna. His hiddenness. All was preparation for teaching Father Jacques how to love.

•••


One day, ISIS drove Father Jacques from Raqqa to Palmyra, where he discovered that 250 of his parishioners had also been kidnapped. In time, they were allowed to return to Qaryatayn after signing a document accepting a long list of severe prohibitions, above all to their freedom of movement. Their lives, however, would be spared.

ISIS was now in control of Qaryatayn. His monastery had been partially destroyed. The tomb of Mar Elian desecrated. The trees remained.

Jacques was touched when, on the Christians’ first night back in Qaryatayn, Muslims from the village



Even if a man is carrying weapons, this does not obscure the image of God within him.



brought them food. He knew that these Muslims, by aiding their Christian friends, were taking a risk. But they wanted their Christian neighbors to understand that they were still on their side. Father Jacques held Mass in a basement. He presided over funerals. Russian jets bombarded. He feared that the Christian girls might be forced to marry ISIS fighters.

The Muslims of Qaryatayn could help. They dressed Christian girls in black abayas and smuggled them through the checkpoints, pretending that they were their wives or sisters, out of the village and to safety.

Father Jacques knew he also needed to escape. A Muslim friend disguised him as a Bedouin and put him on the back of his motorcycle, driving him out of town. When they reached the ISIS checkpoint, the militants asked Father Jacques his name. Ahmad Abdullah, he said. They waved them through.

His friend had put himself in grave danger to rescue him. But now he was free.

“Your question is: Why did these Muslims risk their lives to save us?” Father Jacques asks me. “The answer that they gave us is this: Because we are their family.”

...

In the meantime, another tragedy had been unfolding across the border in Iraq. In 2014 ISIS invaded Mosul and the Nineveh Plains, forcing roughly 100,000 Christians to flee. Dozens of families sought shelter at the Monastery of Maryam al-Adrah in Iraqi Kurdistan, where the community of al-Khalil has kept a small presence since 2010. They crowded into every corner available, even sleeping in the church. When Father Jacques joined them in 2016 he was devastated by the scene.

“If it wasn’t easy for me,” he says. “How was it for the heart of God?”

Thousands of Muslims had also fled, Yazidis had escaped a genocide on Mount Sinjar, and Syrian refugees were streaming across the border. Father Jacques found himself a refugee among refugees.

He collaborated with the Community of Sant’Egidio’s Humanitarian Corridors program to help Syrians obtain visas to Europe without risking the dangerous Mediterranean cross-

ing. He worried about Syrian men who might be conscripted into the army and forced to bear arms. The words echoed in his heart: “Don’t be worried about who will kill the body but who will kill the soul.”

...

Today, most of the Christians who sought shelter at the monastery in 2014 have returned to their villages, now liberated from ISIS. Others have been resettled in Europe and Australia. Estimates say that Iraq’s Christian population has fallen from 1.5 million in 2003 to roughly 250,000. The Christian community in Syria has also been devastated.

“The danger of ending a Christian presence in the Middle East can be symbolized by a tree whose roots have been removed,” Father Jacques says. “When a tree no longer has its roots, what is its destiny? It dies. The situation that we are living has reached a stage of complete collapse. If we as Middle Eastern Christians do not understand the dimensions of this reality, nothing will convince us to stay.”

Those who remain carry stories. Across the alley lives Silvana Maqdas, an Assyrian Christian displaced from the village of Tel Keyf in northern Iraq. She fled in 2014, pregnant and worried that her town would fall soon. Her son was born here in Sulaimaniya, two days after Tel Keyf fell to ISIS.

A few families from near Mosul live in white container shelters around the monastery. Their children roller skate in front of the church, past the military post, placed there by the government after the terrorist attack on the Church of Our Lady of Salvation killed dozens of worshippers in Baghdad in 2010. A family displaced from Damascus lives upstairs. A man named Khudr runs errands for the makeshift community. He left Baghdad in 2010 for Bashiqa, to flee again in 2014. When I ask him what his job is, he laughs: “Whatever they ask me to do.”

The monastic community at Deir Mariam al-Adhrah, like that of Mar Musa, remains dedicated to living in dialogue with their Muslim neighbors. In the afternoons, the monastery courtyard fills with students here for language classes and theater workshops, and most of them are Muslims. Many, too, are refugees and internally displaced persons. I speak to Naja Imam, from Kobani in Syria, who is the assistant to Father Jens Petzold, the monastery’s abbot. After she, her mother and her sister were thrown into an ISIS prison, accused of dressing immodestly, they knew it was time to leave. She describes dead bodies in the streets, the danger of the passage, the cruelty of those who rented out animal barns for refugees to sleep in. Now, she has found new life. “I have friends—Abouna

Father Jacques shares a laugh with Sister Friederike, a member of the monastic community of al-Khalil.



Jens and Abouna Jacques,” she says. “Here you feel safe.”

Each person carries the memory of a city left behind. When I ask them about Father Jacques, many repeat the same sentence: He always has time for us.

In the evening, the Christians gather to celebrate Mass in the church. It no longer matters who is Catholic or Orthodox, Syrian or Iraqi. Father Jacques once called this the “ecumenism of blood.”

Ruba, once a member of her choir, sings. Father Jacques joins.

Later, Ruba will lead me to her room to lend me a jacket. I had not expected it to be so cold. She will describe surviving the war in Syria and missing her family. My eyes will fall on a cross made of connected phrases on a table beside the bed. “It’s from Abouna Jacques,” she explains.

It is the text of “Nada te Turbe.”

•••

A scene sometimes comes to Father Jacques’s mind. He was walking in Qaryatayn when a fighter jet bombarded the street in front of him. By instinct, he threw himself to the ground.

This is what you do in wartime, he says: You throw yourself to the ground. And once you are forced to be close to the ground, you understand the wisdom of being there, for it is close to the ground that you become closer to people and understand their needs and listen. Your presence reminds them that God is present, too. God became small; He, too, went close to the ground.

Father Jacques takes comfort in knowing that Mar Musa in Syria remains open. Its small front door, entered by bowing down, reminds him of what Jesus said about the narrow gate: “For the gate is narrow and the road is hard that leads to life, and there are few who find it.”

The way to stop violence is through repentance. Lord, Jesus Christ, have mercy on me. But when you bow down and come out the other side of the door to the immense expanse of the desert, you understand just how wide the kingdom is.

•••

When he was young, Jacques loved a second sentence. He read it in *The Book of Mirdad*, by Mikhael Naimy: “When you love everything you are attached to nothing.”

“Love is freedom,” he explains.

Perhaps he is thinking of the freedom to return to Syria, which he hopes to do soon. Or the freedom to lay down one’s life, which he almost did. But I suspect he means simply the freedom of giving himself away daily, in cups of coffee and hours spent, in onions chopped. If he loves cooking, it is be-

cause he believes he resembles Jesus most when he prepares a meal for his friends.

“We are the yeast,” he likes to say. The little things we do matter. When I ask him if God really cares about my salad, he laughs, but then turns serious: “There’s nothing called ‘my salad,’” he reminds me. “There’s nothing called ‘my kingdom’ or ‘my church’ or ‘my people.’ The salad I am preparing for others is the kingdom for today. The helping of a poor man at the door is the kingdom for today.”

Love is the freedom to give everything away. Even our grievances.

He explains with a story: Whenever a feud broke out between families in Qaryatayn, he and the sheikh would be invited to help them reconcile. When they entered a house, Father Jacques and the sheikh would first be offered a cup of coffee, the symbol of hospitality. They would accept but not drink.

“We want to solve this problem,” Father Jacques would announce. “What should we do?” And the hosts, more often than not, even if blood had been shed, insisted: “Oh, Abouna. Oh, Sheikh—the problem has already been solved by your arrival. Please, drink your coffee!”

“How, then,” Father Jacques asks, “can I not base my hopes for reconciliation on the generosity of people?”

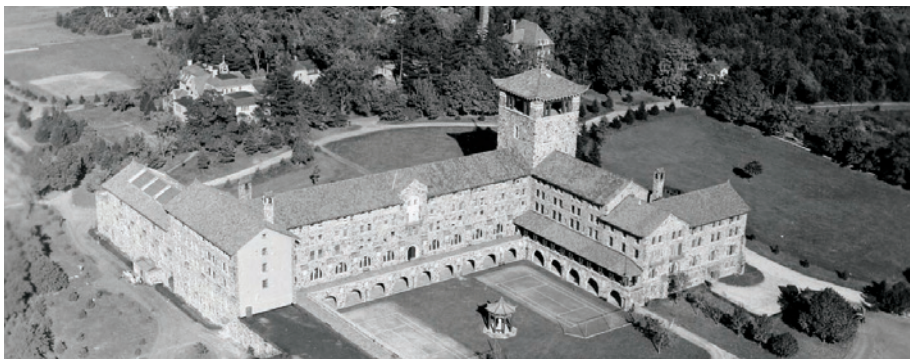
Stephanie Saldaña writes about the Middle East and is the author, most recently, of *A Country Between*. This article was produced with the support of the USC Center for Religion and Civic Culture, the John Templeton Foundation and Templeton Religion Trust. Opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect the views of these organizations.

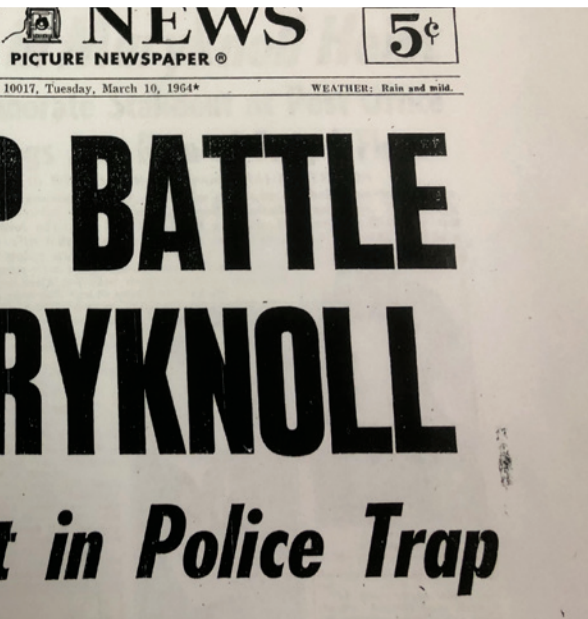


To see a video of Father Jacques reciting “Nada Te Turbe” go to www.americamagazine.org/features/frjacques.

THE GREAT MARYKNOLL POST OFFICE ROBBERY

How a tiny office in Ossining, N.Y., became the site of a caper for the ages | By James T. Keane





When Robert Mosher, Richard Bracken, Edward Reid and William Cattano drove onto the campus of the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers in Ossining, N.Y., on the foggy morning of March 9, 1964, they might not have noticed anything amiss. Men in cassocks were strolling about the property, and everything looked much the same as on their previous three visits to the campus. Perhaps the only incongruous elements were the signs posted here and there reading “Cave Fures.”

Every Maryknoller, from the oldest priests and sisters to the youngest brothers and novices, probably would have known immediately what the signs said. It is not clear, however, that the eager, would-be thieves were well versed in Latin, so it was likely all Greek to them.

The signs read, “Beware of Bandits.”

The Plan

Pulling up in a single rented car to the small post office located in the Price Building on the Maryknoll campus, three of the men raced inside, guns drawn, while a fourth stood outside as the lookout. “It was a terribly foggy day, and so hard to see anything,” Maryknoll priest Father Richard Albertine, who was a seminarian at Maryknoll at the time, remembered recently. “A perfect day for a robbery.”

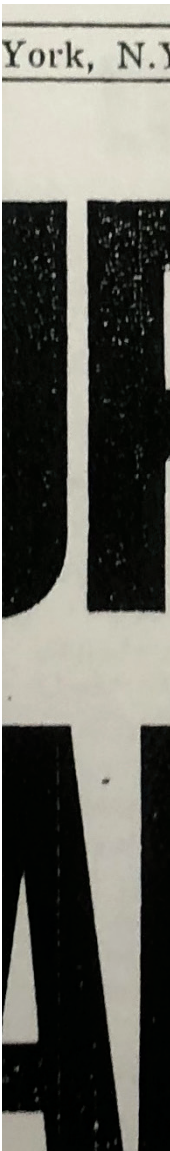
The bandits quickly forced the postmistress, a woman wearing the habit of the Maryknoll Sisters of St. Dominic (whose campus is directly across the street in Ossining), into a nearby closet. Their goal was to grab cash, postage stamps and the sweetest plum of all: thousands of blank money orders and Treasury Department checks that could be filled out for almost any amount. They loaded mail bags with the money orders and Treasury checks, as well as \$3,000 in cash, \$30,000 in stamps and, for good measure, incoming mail containing \$1,500 in subscription payments to Maryknoll’s magazine and donations to the order.


Their next goal, according to a letter by Albert J. Nevins, M.M., in the Maryknoll Mission Archives (Nevins was director of public relations at Maryknoll at the time, and

Maryknoll priests and lay employees load mail sacks at Maryknoll in the 1920s. By the time of the attempted post office robbery in 1964, incoming donations and outgoing issues of *The Field Afar* meant that every month more than 2,000 sacks of mail came and went from the Maryknoll Post Office.


The Maryknoll Seminary building in Ossining, N.Y., still the largest standing fieldstone structure in the United States.

Headline writers had a field day with the news of the attempted robbery. Almost every New York daily paper gave it front-page coverage, including this banner headline in the *New York Daily News*. (Photo credit for all images: Maryknoll Mission Archives)





Suddenly a number of the men in cassocks produced Tommy guns and pistols, and a loud bullhorn ordered the four to surrender.



later served as editor in chief of Our Sunday Visitor for 11 years, was to “then go directly to Mount Mercy College [almost certainly Mercy College in nearby Dobbs Ferry] and rob that of all its tuition monies, and then commit a third robbery on a large parish church in the Bronx, which would not have yet banked its Sunday collection.” (The Church of the Good Shepherd, the bandits’ true third intended target, is actually located in the Inwood neighborhood of Manhattan.)

Emerging a few minutes later, they stashed the mail bags in the trunk of their car and prepared to make their getaway. But not all was as it seemed: Suddenly a number of the men in cassocks produced Tommy guns and pistols, and a man with a loud bullhorn ordered the four to surrender.

The robed men were, in fact, officers of the law—present in huge numbers.

The New York Times reported the next day that 40 state troopers, eight New York City police officers and a handful of Westchester County deputy sheriffs were there to meet the four, and letters in the Maryknoll Mission Archives indicate that both law enforcement and Maryknoll’s leadership had known of the plot for six months.

Father Albertine remembers walking into the garage area of one of Maryknoll’s buildings several hours before the attempted robbery that morning and seeing countless Tommy guns and other weapons, as well as numerous officers. “I got in and out of there as fast I could,” he said. “Actually, they pretty much threw me out!” Meanwhile, the lay employees on the expansive campus had been invited to spend several hours watching movies and enjoying hospitality with doughnuts and coffee in the basement of the Seminary Building.

The Maryknoll sister the thieves locked in the closet? She was Frances Anderson, another Westchester County deputy sheriff. The regular postmistress, Maryknoll Sister William Karen (Margaret) Fitzgerald, had been given the week off. “The decision was made that a police woman would pose as a Sister and would be on duty...” wrote Maryknoll Sister Eileen Mary Moore in an unpublished memoir. “Well, she needed a religious habit and at our convent we were told about the upcoming incident and since I seemed to be about the same size, I was asked to provide a set of my clothing to the police woman.”

Why Maryknoll?

To understand why the bandits would target the tiny post office at Maryknoll requires some historical background on Maryknoll and the Catholic Church in the United States in 1964. Vocations to religious life were at an all-time high, and Maryknoll (founded in 1911 with the official name Catholic Foreign Mission Society of the United States) was growing into a vast enterprise, widely admired by American Catholics for the heroic service of its male and female missionaries. Many of the large number of Maryknoll missionaries in China had suffered terribly at the hands of the communist regime in the years after 1949. The New York Times estimated in 1964 that the two campuses of Maryknoll in Ossining were home to 750 priests, sisters, postulants, novices and brothers.

Their magazine, *The Field Afar* (since rebranded as *Maryknoll Magazine* and *Revista*—the latter currently the largest Spanish-language Catholic magazine in the United States), was hugely popular for its firsthand stories of missionary work overseas and brought in large sums in subscriptions and donations—all of them flowing in and out of the Maryknoll Post Office. “It made some sense,” Sister Moore later wrote about the attempted robbery. “American Catholics were incredibly generous. Donations poured in every day through bags of mail.”

A contract bid from a trucking company in 1937 to the superintendent of the U.S. Post Office said that once a month “approximately 1,000 bags of mail containing magazines must be hauled to Ossining and sorted in the Mail Car.” The proprietor complained that it “requires the labor of 4 extra men for eight hours on that day each month.” Just three years later, a Maryknoll employee estimated the number had grown to 2,037 sacks of mail, weighing over 45,000 pounds. Eventually the volume of mail coming

Continued on Page 37

Things Shot in Police Iran

AMERICA'S VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

When I wrapped up my undergraduate studies last year, I had a choice between two general career options: make money, or don't. Why on earth would I, or anyone, pick the latter?

Our culture convinces us that the only way to be successful is to hop on the corporate fast track at a young age, work relentlessly for several years and then comfortably reap the benefits of financial stability later in life. I think our faith gives us a different definition of success. "Love one another, as I have loved you." The volunteer opportunities in this brochure are invitations to fulfill that commandment in some particular way. Where is God calling us to love as he loves?

I am now in the middle of a year-long fellowship at America Media in New York City. No, it's not the most financially profitable path I could have taken, but for me, it has been the right one. God invites me to love, to learn, to explore each day. That's enough for me.

Kevin Jackson, *O'Hare fellow*



America Media O'Hare Fellowship

1212 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10036
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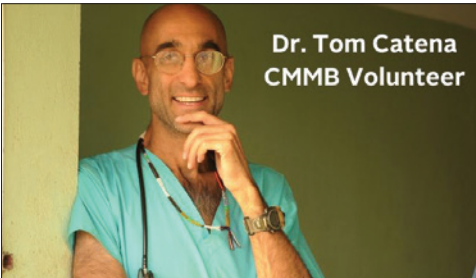
The Joseph A. O'Hare, S.J., Postgraduate Media Fellowship supports the next generation of content producers for Catholic media. The fellowship offers three recent graduates of U.S. Jesuit colleges or universities the opportunity to develop their media skills while working at America Media and living in New York City.



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830 Western Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15233
 Ph: (412) 334-4746; Email: pmoran@sosf.org
 Website: www.changeaheartvolunteers@sosf.org

We are a ministry of the Sisters of St. Francis of the Neumann Communities in Pittsburgh, Pa. An 11-month, faith-based program that invites young adults ages 21 to 30 to serve the most vulnerable among us, across all ages, backgrounds and areas of need in a nonprofit of their choosing.



Colorado Vincentian Volunteers

1732 Pearl Street, Denver, CO 80203
 Ph: (303) 863-8141; Email: cvv@covivo.org
 Website: www.covivo.org

“GAP YEAR?” The Colorado Vincentian Volunteers is an intentional community of faith and action. Women and men, ages 22 to 30, live in community, grow in spirituality and serve those who are poor. This year will “fill the gap.” Risk, be a catalyst for change, & take a leap of faith!



Franciscan Mission Service

415 Michigan Ave NE, Suite 104, Washington, D.C. 20017
 Ph: (202) 832-1762; Email: info@franciscanmissionservice.org
 Website: www.franciscanmissionservice.org

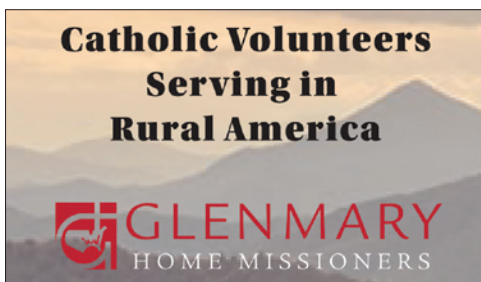
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Ph: (716) 375-2613; Email: mfenn@sbu.edu
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P.O. Box 69, Rutledge, TN 37861
 Ph: (606) 202-3658; Email: volunteer@glenmary.org
 Website: www.glenmary.org

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Landings International

415 Michigan Ave NE, Suite 108, Washington, DC 20017
 Ph: (202) 635-5818; Email: landingsdc@gmail.com
 Website: www.landingsintl.org

For 40 years, *Landings* International, a reconciliation ministry of the Paulist Fathers, has helped parishes nationwide welcome returning Catholics. Our volunteers understand the importance of creating welcoming spaces in parishes where distanced Catholics can tell their story, deepen their faith and be accompanied on their journey back to the church.



Loretto Volunteer Program

Email: lorettovolunteers@lorettocommunity.org
 Website: www.lorettovolunteers.org

Loretto Volunteers serve full-time for one year at social justice organizations while living in community with each other. Placements available in Denver, El Paso, St. Louis, New York City and Washington, D.C. Volunteers receive support from the Loretto Community, an inclusive order of women religious dedicated to justice and peace.



Maggie's Place

Ph: (602) 596-4989; Email: americorps@maggiesplace.org
 Website: www.maggiesplace.org/how-you-can-help/volunteer

Maggie's Place provides houses of hospitality and ongoing support to help pregnant and parenting women in need reach their goals, and welcomes them into a community filled with love and dignity. Our homes are staffed by female, live-in AmeriCorps members who spend a year of service living with our moms and babies.



Mercy Volunteer Corps

1325 Sunnyside Pike P.O. Box 901, Gwynedd Valley, PA 19437
 Ph: (215) 641-5535; Email: ContactUs@mercyvolunteers.org
 Website: www.mercyvolunteers.org

Mercy Volunteer Corps places volunteers for one year of service in the United States and South America. Mercy Volunteers serve in professional placements while living in community and growing spiritually. Benefits include housing, transportation, monthly stipends, student loan deferment and graduate school discounts. Applications are accepted on a rolling basis.



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Missionary Teaching Program, The Haitian Project, Inc.

P.O. Box 6891, Providence, RI 02940
 Ph: (401) 351-3624; Email: development@haitianproject.org
 Website: www.haitianproject.org

The Haitian Project is seeking missionaries to teach, work and live in community in Haiti beginning in August 2020 at Louverture Cleary School, a tuition-free, Catholic, co-educational secondary boarding school for academically talented and motivated students from Haitian families who cannot afford the cost of their children's education.



Mountain Companion Ministry—Mt. Irenaeus

3621 Roberts Rd, Friendship, NY 14739
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 Website: www.mountainonline.org/our-life/community/companions

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Red Cloud Volunteer Program

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 Ph: (605) 867-5888; x2236; Email: volunteer@redcloudschool.org
 Website: www.redcloudschool.org

Red Cloud Indian School is a Jesuit Lakñóta Catholic K-12 school on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota. Volunteers serve 1-3 years as educators and bus drivers, collaborating with the Oglala Lakñóta people for justice in education, while also living simply in intentional volunteer communities and growing spiritually through prayer, faith-sharing and retreats.



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4000 Denlinger Road, Dayton, OH 45426
 Ph: (937) 837-3302; Email: jlegg@cppsadmin.org
 Website: www.preciousbloodsistersvocations.com

The Sisters of the Precious Blood are an apostolic community of religious women, who are motivated by eucharistic prayer to continue Jesus' work of reconciliation. We do this through ministries in social justice, education, health care, parish ministry and more. We live in small communities that eat and pray together regularly.



The Passionists of Holy Cross Province

660 Busse Highway, Park Ridge, IL 60068
 Ph: (847) 518-8844; Email: vocations@passionist.org
 Website: www.passionist.org

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White Violet Center for Eco-Justice

1 Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, IN 47876
 Ph: (812) 535-2932; Email: internswvc@spsmw.org
 Website: www.internships.whiteviolet.org

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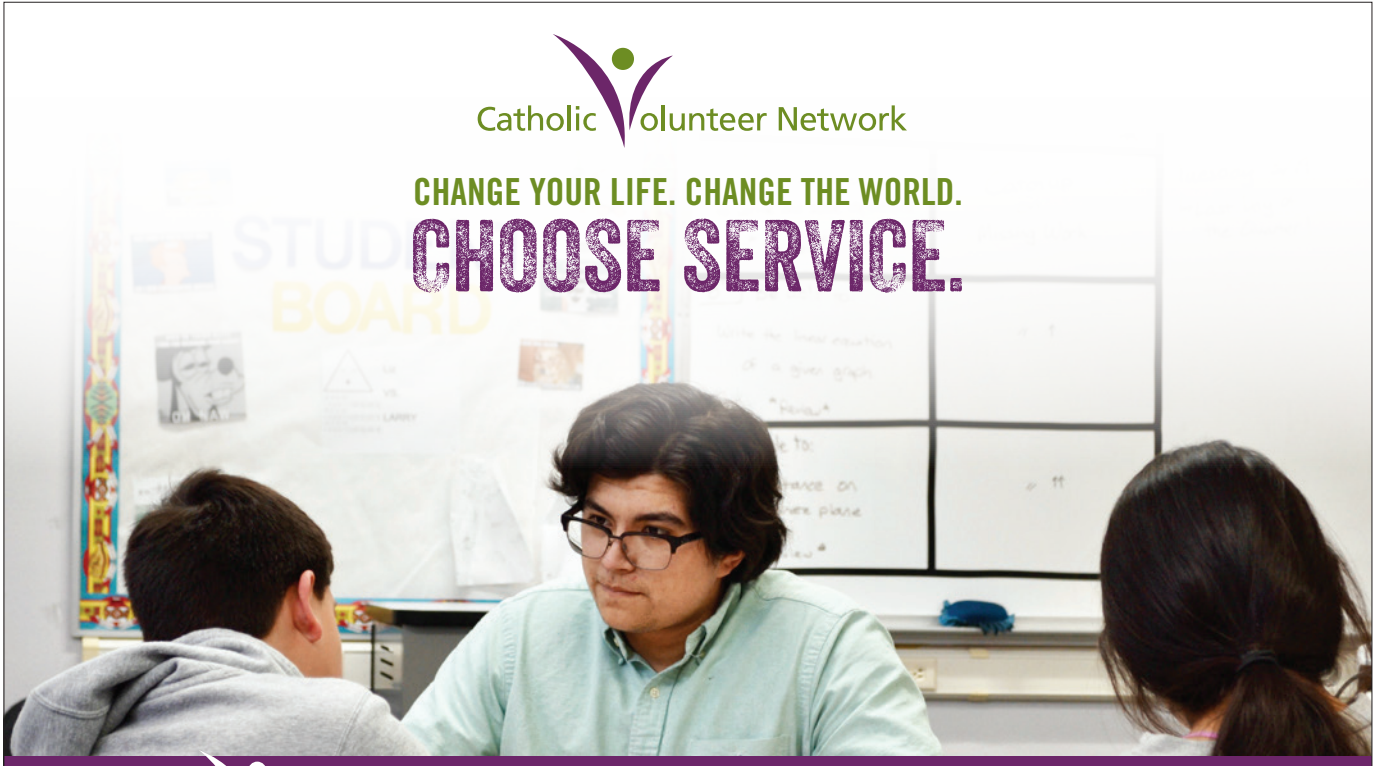
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The Maryknoll Post Office in the lower right corner of the Price Building, in the 1960s. Maryknoll was receiving and sending so much mail that the campus was assigned its own zip code.

and going from the post office led to Maryknoll getting its own zip code. Even today, Maryknoll Magazine and Revista have a readership of over 300,000.

In addition, because of its location at one of the highest points in Ossining and its distinctive and imposing Seminary Building—built of local fieldstone with pagoda roofs in a style that hinted at Maryknoll’s ambitious goals for the conversion of China in the first half of the 20th century—the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers’ campus was held in some esteem by locals, including those locked up in the nearby Sing Sing Correctional Facility. The Maryknoll building remains the largest standing fieldstone structure in the United States.

Maryknoll also offered an almost perfect layout for such a caper. Woods dominated much of the land on every side, and neither the Maryknoll Post Office nor the larger campus had any security guards—and the post office was located at some distance from the Seminary Building.

The Shootout

In response to repeated calls to surrender, the robbers refused and instead opened fire on the officers while piling into their getaway car. Joseph Healey, a Maryknoll priest now serving in Nairobi, Kenya, was a Maryknoll seminarian living at Maryknoll at the time. He was in class when shots rang out, but told *America* in an email interview that the priest teaching the class “would not let us go look.”

Three of the robbers were soon shot as they tried to escape in their car. The police concentrated fire on their tires, and their car careened into a ditch; all three were quickly captured. The fourth would-be thief, the lookout Mr. Cattano, sprinted for a side door in the Price Building. According to Jack Jennings, a former New York City detective, in his book *Injustice: For the Love of Her Father*, detectives hiding inside the door pulled Mr. Cattano into the Price Building, while Jennings tried to cover the door from



the outside. He was shot in the hand—the only officer to be wounded in the shootout. Police reports in the aftermath falsely claimed that Mr. Cattano, whom they described as an “unknown fourth man,” had escaped into the nearby woods.

Maryknoll had made plans for the possibility of injury or death. Mary Mercy Hirschboeck, a Maryknoll sister trained as a physician, treated the wounded bandits, while Father Nevins gave Mr. Reid, one of the thieves, absolution, because at the time Mr. Reid’s wounds seemed life-threatening.

“It seemed to me the man was near death,” Father Nevins told a reporter from the Tarrytown Daily News. “I didn’t even see where the man had been wounded...he seemed to be bleeding from everywhere.”

Upon hearing the news of the failed robbery on the radio, many listeners were confused. Why would a seminary have a post office? Had they just heard correctly that Maryknoll seminarians had robbed a post office? Many tall tales grew from the incident, and suddenly the previously little-known post office was famous. Father Albertine reported that years later he was in Cuba for a meeting with Cuban government officials about missionary work, and one of them said, “Ah, Maryknoll! You have a post office there!”

For the print press, the story was a headline writer’s dream. Life magazine ran a story titled “This is a stickup,

Sister.” “Seminary Holdup Foiled by Police,” The New York Times reported. “HOLDUP BATTLE AT MARYKNOLL,” screamed the Daily News in a headline that took up almost the entire front page, with a subhead worth a month’s pay: “3 Thugs Shot in Police Trap.” “Gun Battle Rocks Famed Maryknoll,” chimed in The New York Journal-American. Even the Catholic press joined in: “4 wrong-way robbers muff Maryknoll caper,” reported the Catholic Universe Bulletin, the official organ of the Diocese of Cleveland.

“I suppose you heard about the big holdup,” wrote Father Nevins to another Maryknoller shortly after. “It was planned for last September, was postponed several times and finally came off last Monday while everyone watched from windows and some fifty policemen closed in on the three bandits. The whole thing was quite ridiculous, and if it was made into a television show, no one would believe it!”

Not everyone was pleased. One man wrote to Father Nevins:

It doesn’t seem believable that a Christian institution and an enlightened police force would have been parties to such a cops and robber game. It should go without saying that the purpose of Christian institutions is to help persons along the way of right, and that the duty of the police is to prevent crime and violence.... How simple and effective it would have been to have taken the robbers (not yet become) and shown them how well the police knew about the robbery plan, and how well-prepared the police were to cope with it.

Father Nevins wrote him a long response, explaining that the police were adamant that the men would simply strike elsewhere if allowed to go free on the Maryknoll caper, and that they were all four known to be violent criminals who would stop at nothing.

How the Caper Was Foiled

Foiling the robbery was not as hard as it seemed. Mr. Cattano turned out to be a snitch and had apparently informed Mr. Jennings, the detective, months earlier of the plan hatched in the cells of Sing Sing after he had been arrested following an earlier robbery. Mr. Jennings notified the F.B.I., the N.Y.P.D. and the Westchester County sheriffs of the plot. He also contacted the superiors of the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers and the Maryknoll Sisters across the street.

He received permission from the Westchester County Jail, where Mr. Cattano was being held on an assault charge,



to take Mr. Cattano out of custody for one night, accompanied by a deputy sheriff and one of Mr. Jennings’ detectives, so that Mr. Cattano could show the officers the route to the post office and the plans for making their getaway. Afterward, the three stopped at a bar for a drink, and Mr. Cattano promptly slipped away into the night, only to be recaptured at 3 a.m. at the White Plains Metro North station; he was returning from a visit to his girlfriend in the Bronx.

The day of the robbery, Mr. Cattano was rushed away from the crime scene for fear he would either be killed by an officer or detected as a rat by the other thieves. The relationship between Mr. Jennings and Mr. Cattano, however, was not the only source of information about the heist. A Maryknoll priest who visited Sing Sing as a chaplain had reported to his superiors that the four men were not the most discreet about their plot, and many a prisoner wanted to know: “Has the Maryknoll Post Office robbery come off yet?”

John P. Martin, a Maryknoll priest who was also a seminarian at the time, recalled seeing “the ‘seminarians’ walking the paths north of the Seminary Building, since my room faced north from over the sacristy. My attention was caught by the fact that they walked around with their hands in their pockets. I knew that they were cops handling their Tommy guns or revolvers and not good seminarians.”



Sister Katherine Slattery, M.M., serves a customer in the Maryknoll Post Office, circa 1920s. On the day of the attempted robbery in 1964, a Westchester County deputy sheriff wore the habit of a Maryknoll sister as part of the plan to foil the heist.

Maryknoll sisters sort mail at the Maryknoll Post Office, date unknown.

The Aftermath

The three captured thieves were transported to Grasslands Hospital (replaced in 1977 by Westchester Medical Center) and treated for their wounds. A week later, they were indicted by a Westchester County grand jury for robbery, grand larceny, possession of firearms and assault. All three were sentenced to long prison terms.

The fate of the supposed “unknown fourth man,” Mr. Cattano, remained a mystery to many for 41 years, until J. Radley Herold, a Westchester County assistant district attorney at the time of the robbery, wrote a letter to *The New York Times* in 2005. “Months before the robbery, the ‘fourth’ man (who has long since died) had informed law enforcement officials of the plan to rob the post office,” Mr. Herold wrote. “According to plan and with the cooperation of the police, he joined the other three men for the robbery

and then fled the scene.”

The thieves and their families had figured it out much quicker. According to a 1967 *Life* magazine profile of Mr. Cattano, “Within minutes of the first radio bulletin on the Maryknoll job, wives and girlfriends of the bandits were on the telephone, hysterically and furiously telling one another that ‘the one who got away had to be [an informant].’” Mr. Cattano, who served time in Rikers Island for his crimes, knew there was a price on his head. “I don’t expect to get to be an old man,” he told *Life*. By then he had moved to Miami, where the next year he was killed in a suspicious boating accident while consorting with jewel thieves and plotting another audacious heist.

Mr. Jennings, the detective who first flipped Mr. Cattano, was awarded the *Journal-American’s* Public Protector award for the month of March 1964 and also received a letter of thanks from Cardinal Francis Spellman, archbishop of New York, for his work of “more than seven months to insure the safety of the Church.”

The Maryknoll post office remains open today in its same location. Locals treasure it because there is never a line, and they have been known to protest reports that publicize its existence because of its current efficiency and anonymity. There are no longer sisters (fake or real) behind the counter, nor ersatz priests with Tommy guns roaming around outside, but the campus now has tight security. It is one of the best places in Westchester to mail a letter.

Oh, and Sr. Eileen Mary Moore, who lent out her clothes? “I got my habit back, cleaned, and no bullet holes.”

James T. Keane is a senior editor at America. From 2012 to 2017, he was an editor at Orbis Books, which is located on the Maryknoll campus in the Price Building.



A PILGRIM AT HOME

By Vincent Strand

I found God in the familiar on the Wisconsin Way



Holy Hill Basilica and National Shrine
of Mary Help of Christians

At dawn my brother and I arrived at the Shrine of Our Lady of Good Help in Champion, Wis. The place was deserted, except for one woman on her knees who looked like she never left the shrine, like Anna who never left the Temple. I found my way to the crypt chapel and knelt before a statue of Mary. Amid the flowers and flickering votive lamps, I prayed. My brother lit a candle, gave me a hug and then drove away. And then, through a light rain and howling wind, I left the chapel and started walking down a lonely farm road. I was on pilgrimage, not in a foreign land, but back where I had been born and raised. I was on the Wisconsin Way.

This new pilgrimage links the Shrine of Our Lady of Good Help, near Green Bay, with the Basilica and National Shrine of Mary Help of Christians (popularly known as “Holy Hill”), northwest of Milwaukee. Much of the 130-mile route passes through the Kettle Moraine, a long swath of land in eastern Wisconsin carved by glaciers into a post-card-worthy landscape of lakes, hills, ridges and plains. Several days are spent on the Ice Age National Scenic Trail, which winds through hardwood forests and wetlands. Other segments of the pilgrimage follow rural roads over rolling hills quilted with dairy farms. Lodging is found at the monasteries, churches and, if necessary, campsites that dot the way.

While the component trails and roads of the pilgrimage are well marked, a traveler will see no signs for the Wisconsin Way nor find a detailed map of it. Knowledge of the route is passed on through word-of-mouth, bringing back the type of oral cartography by which travel was done in this land for centuries, first by native peoples, then by European explorers, traders and settlers. (Of course, having Google Maps and a pinpoint GPS on your smartphone somewhat breaks the analogy.) This gives the Wisconsin Way a nascent, pioneer quality and generates an excitement characteristic of new ventures.

As I set out the first morning of my journey, that enthusiasm filled me. It was the Monday after Pentecost, the memorial of Mary, Mother of the Church. There were no other pilgrims to be seen, and yet, confident in the Holy Spirit and Our Lady, I had the wild-eyed hope that someday the Wisconsin Way will be mapped and marked and that a pilgrim path akin to the great ones of Europe will emerge right here in the United States. I imagined Chinese Catholics 800 years from now coming to the United States to tread old Christian pilgrimage routes, just as we Americans now go to Europe.

It was back in the old continent, where I had been living off-and-on the previous few years, that my desire to make a pilgrimage had grown. It was fueled by signs persistent and occasional and a restlessness born from too many hours in

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Legend has it that the 17th-century Jesuit priest Jacques Marquette consecrated “Holy Hill” to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

cramped library carrels. There was the evening I answered the doorbell at the Jesuit parish in Germany where I was working and was greeted by a pilgrim who was walking—for the second time—from Poland to Spain’s Santiago de Compostela and back. There was the phone conversation with my spiritual father in which I was lamenting the civilizational and ecclesial disintegration of our time, and he said: “When things are collapsing, go into the desert. There are no buildings to fall on you there.”

But which desert?

Then, on an Easter visit to Czestochowa, I knew. The devotion of the pilgrims at this Polish shrine moved me, but I had seen that before—at Czestochowa and at Lourdes and Fatima, Altötting and Marija Bistrica. No, this time I was struck by how the Black Madonna was theirs. She belonged to these people, and they belonged to her. This mutual possession—we might even call it love—was forged during a long history involving Hussites and Swedes, Nazis and Communists, and is renewed every August as pilgrims leave Warsaw and journey 140 miles over nine days to their Madonna.

The Poles at Czestochowa appeared to me as contemporary *anawim*: unfashionably dressed, a bit corpulent—a striking contrast to the Coco Chanel-clad Parisians of *le septième arrondissement* where I was living that spring. Most of the pilgrims at Czestochowa would not have had the financial resources to fly to Spain or Mexico City to make a pilgrimage. Nor had they need: Why journey abroad when Our Lady resides in your homeland?

The call then hit me like a flash: Go back home and make a pilgrimage in Wisconsin. For, according to the local bishop, the Queen of Heaven had visited there.

In 2010, David L. Ricken, the bishop of the Diocese of Green Bay, issued a decree affirming the supernatural character of apparitions of Our Lady received by a young Belgian immigrant woman, Adele Brise, in 1859 near the small village of Robinsonville, Wis. (now Champion). This declaration made it the first Marian apparition in the United States with ecclesiastical approval. The woman clothed in dazzling white introduced herself as the “Queen of Heaven” and had a simple message for Adele: Work for the conversion of sinners and instruct the children of this “wild country” in what is needed for salvation—the catechism, the Sign of the Cross and reception of the sacraments. Within months, a shrine was erected on the site of the visions.

In 1871, the deadliest fire in American history swept through the region, killing more than 1,500 people and scorching all the farmland surrounding the shrine—right up to the property’s fence. Miraculously, the five-acre grounds of the sanctuary, to which many had fled for refuge, were left untouched. Later, physical healings were reported: the blind received sight, the lame walked. In 2009 a commission was launched, which included Marian experts investigating the doctrinal fidelity of the locutions and the integrity of Adele’s life. The investigation and a century and a half of local devotion culminated in Bishop Ricken’s decree.

Three of the years I had lived in Europe were spent in Rome, where I showed the city’s saints, streets and churches to tourists—mostly Catholics and mostly Americans. I never tired of recounting the life of St. Ignatius Loyola while showing his rooms or lecturing on the frescoes of the Church of the Gesù. Yet I began to feel what the Italians would call *un disagio*—uneasiness—during these tours. I wondered why we American Catholics—myself included—were such voracious consumers of Catholic culture but not its creators.

We visit stunning churches in Europe and tend to build bland ones at home. Our theology, in the main, is regurgitated thought by German and French scholars like Karl Rahner and Henri de Lubac. For pilgrimages, we Americans ignore the kitschy Marian shrine next door and—all dressed up like REI models—fly to Spain and hit the Camino (thereby also fleeing the poor folks lighting candles in the neighborhood shrine, whose horizons and budgets make travel to Europe unthinkable).

I know this all first-hand; it describes much of my life. I sought God as a pilgrim in distant lands and ignored God’s presence at home.

Lines from the theologian Stanley Hauerwas haunted me: “In Italy, Christianity is in the stones, and in America, we have no stones. The Christianity in America is not thick in practices that actually form bodies to understand better what it means to be Christian.” In terms of church atten-

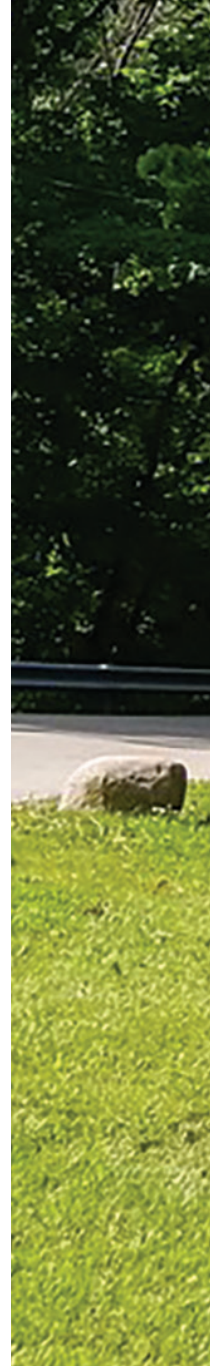




Photo provided by author

dance, the United States is more religious than most of Europe. Yet Catholicism has never given birth to culture in America the way it has in Sicily or Bavaria, where even now cities remain built around the cathedral square, and shops close on Corpus Christi and the Assumption.


Even if such structuring of space and time is a remnant of a lost world, people who inhabit such places still have Catholicism in their bones in a way different than American Catholics. In this country, religion tends to be more propositional, more based on voluntary association. Pockets of Catholic culture have existed and continue to exist in the United States, but these are largely immigrant Catholicisms borrowed from the old countries. Their vibrancy fades as one Americanizes.

Yet wherever the faith is strong it generates culture. It produces Christian stones. But how might one do so in 21st-century America without being exclusive or anachronistic?


I found one example where I least expected it, back home, where believers were quietly at work making the stones Christian by walking on them as religious pilgrims along the Wisconsin Way.

The pilgrimage was the brainchild of the Rev. Andrew Kurz, a priest of the Diocese of Green Bay, who leads several Wisconsin Way pilgrimages each year. They take various forms. Some are nearly two-week hikes; others last for just a few days and blend travel on foot and in cars.

I had decided to travel alone. Here I was, I thought, a pilgrim with no marked path. I couldn't decide if I was



I sought God as a pilgrim in distant lands and ignored his presence at home.



more like the first Christian in this land or the last. Sometimes I imagined myself as a Jesuit missionary, crucifix in hand, setting foot on a new shore. At other times, lines from G. K. Chesterton's "Lepanto" danced in my head—"the last knight of Europe takes weapons from the wall"—and I would think, *that's me*.

But over time that mysterious process every pilgrim knows began. The surrounding silence, the rhythm of one's body—step after step, mile after mile—quiets the clanging of our cluttered minds and souls (stilling, mercifully, even our romanticism), cultivating that interior silence that draws us to the desert in the first place.

As I walked along and the days passed, I saw that I was hardly the first Christian in this land. Each small town had a Catholic church—often a magnificent one. Out in the fields where the corn and soybeans were springing up, there were roadside shrines of the kind one might expect to see in Bavaria or the Tyrol. My path took me through a region Wisconsinites still call "The Holyland" on account of its abundance of handsome churches erected in the 19th century by Rhenish immigrants.

I passed through St. Nazianz, a small farming village begun when a charismatic priest, the Rev. Ambrose Oswald, left the Black Forest for Wisconsin in 1854. A whole village followed him, setting up a Catholic community modeled on the early Christians in the Acts of the Apostles, in which everything was held in common.

One daydreams on the long road. As I walked, I found myself wanting to go back to the Catholicism of the '50s and early '60s—not the 1950s but the 1850s, when my immigrant ancestors settled the Wisconsin frontier and my great-great-great grandfather donated a piece of his land to the first bishop of Milwaukee to found the parish in which I grew up.

I longed not for the early 1960s but the early 1660s, when French Jesuits set up missions in present-day Wisconsin. There was no evidence of the black robes, but nonetheless I thought of them frequently, offering the first Mass in this land, first speaking the holy name of Jesus.

Sometimes I would look up and think of a vision one of the missionaries, St. Jean de Brebeuf, once had: a massive cross in the sky extending across the whole continent, large enough for each Jesuit to shoulder a portion of the beam. At other times I would gaze at the sky and imagine it as Mary's blue mantle protectively draped over the whole land, like paintings I had seen in Germany of the Schutz-mantelmadonna gathering her children.

I learned that I was not the last of her children in this land. My first night was at a flourishing Carmelite monastery, where women—many of them young—go about habit-ed and barefoot behind the walls of a cloister. They are cut off from the world so as to be supernaturally devoted to the world through unceasing prayer. Another evening was at an Eastern Catholic monastery, where that same spirit is lived by the monks, with their beards, bells and billows of incense. Most stops, however, were at country parishes, old rectories where no priest had resided for years—there just aren't many anymore—but where steady lay men and women had kept the place running with joy and generosity.

Having hobbled on sore legs and blistered feet to a parish on the penultimate day of my journey, I remarked to the youth minister there, Eileen Belongea, that I was glad to be almost finished. "What do you mean?" she playfully shot back, "You've still got hundreds of miles to go!" Eileen, a consecrated virgin, had not only done the Champion-Holy Hill route several times, but once, on the 10th anniversary of her consecration, had completed the "full" Wisconsin Way, continuing on to Wisconsin's third Marian shrine, Our Lady of Guadalupe in La Crosse, a 400-mile journey that took her 30 days.

Like the storytellers in *The Canterbury Tales*, Eileen and I swapped tales of rainstorms and barking dogs and the good people we had met on the way. We also talked about Adele Brise. I had thought a lot about Adele as I walked, about the Lady she encountered, the message she received. The bishop's decree says in big bold letters that believing in this apparition is not obligatory, since it is a private revelation, not a doctrine like the divinity of Christ. Did I believe it? I wanted to—and Pascal says that the one who seeks God has already found him.

I believe that Our Lady is the Queen of Heaven. I believe in the devotion of the people who had come to the

shrine for more than a century and in what those visits had done for their faith. I believe in the hope contained in Mary's parting words to Adele—"Go and fear nothing. I will help you"—and in the continued relevance of Our Lady's message at Champion, which, after all, was simply the Gospel: teach the faith, care for the children, repent. In a world of empty churches, children in detention camps, mass shootings, we need that message. We need to be healed, converted and instructed in the way of Jesus.

This change must happen in the depths of our being, in our hearts, from which arise those religious practices that themselves give birth to culture. Among these practices are pilgrimages, which seem to be assuming a special role in our time. Somehow pilgrimages gently speak to people wary of dogmatism but eager to wander, people starved for a unified experience of body and soul in a disembodied, technocratic culture that has rent them asunder. Even in countries where church attendance is declining, long-neglected medieval paths are once again trod by the boots of pilgrims.

That is not yet the case on the Wisconsin Way. I passed a few hikers on the trails, but no one, as far I could tell, who was on a religious pilgrimage; although maybe, in another sense, they all were. When I would duck into a gas station to buy a bottle of Gatorade or a bag of trail mix, the cashiers—garrulous Midwesterners bordering on the inquisitorial—would see my pack and ask where I was going, how far. I would explain. "Never heard of such a thing," they would reply, sometimes as they slipped me a free Landjäger. One woman blurted out, "What are you doing that for—are you nuts?" The possibility had crossed my mind, especially when I was pushing out the last few hundred yards of a 20-mile day, with—as T. S. Eliot has his Magi say—"the voices singing in our ears, saying/ That this was all folly."

Then on the last morning, I caught a glimpse of Holy Hill miles away on the horizon, the basilica's twin steeples straining toward heaven. The church is perched on the highest hill in the region—geologists call it a kame, formed 10,000 years ago as meltwater rushed through a sheet of glacial ice, depositing sediment into a massive conical mound. Jesuit missionaries were the first Christians to discover the place.

Legend has it that the Jesuit priest Jacques Marquette consecrated the hill to the Blessed Virgin Mary and erected a stone altar and wooden cross on it. Nearly two centuries later, in the mid-1800s, François Soubrio, a Frenchman working as a professor's assistant in Quebec, came upon a 17th-century map of the Jesuit missions on which Holy

Hill was marked. He felt called—possibly in penance for a murder he had committed—to find the hill and live there as a hermit. Irish immigrant farmers arrived in 1842. At some point in the early 1860s, they came upon Soubrio and thus called the place "Hermit's Hill." A series of chapels were built at the site, culminating in the current basilica, completed in 1931. Many healings have been reported at Holy Hill (a collection of discarded crutches and canes greets one at the entrance to the shrine), although, as one of the Discalced Carmelite friars who care for the place once told me, "the real miracles happen in the confessional."

I had visited Holy Hill countless times. As a boy, my family would climb the bell tower in October to look down at the palette of fall foliage. In college, I even lived at the monastery for a few weeks, discerning a vocation with the Carmelites. Seeing Holy Hill after having walked more than a hundred miles to it, however, was seeing it with fresh eyes. It looked like the new Jerusalem descending from heaven. I thought of Chartres and the experience medieval pilgrims must have had as they finally spotted the cathedral after a long and dangerous journey, the Gothic spires seeming to grow out of the wheat fields as they drew nearer.

As I walked up the final steps to Holy Hill, I passed an old oak cross on which was carved, "Ich bin das Leben, wer an mich glaubt wird selig" ("I am the life, whoever believes in me will be blessed"), and I thought about a homily I had heard at Chartres the year before. Cardinal Robert Sarah asked the thousands of pilgrims who filled the cathedral: You've walked for days through rain and under the hot sun, you've prayed, but have you really welcomed the light of Jesus into your hearts? "Because if God is not our light," Cardinal Sarah continued, "all the rest becomes useless."

For years I had traveled to faraway places and, in a sense, to faraway times in search of that light: 13th-century France, 16th-century Rome. Nine days of walking back home, in the present moment, taught me that is unnecessary. God is found not only in the exotic but also in the familiar. "I am the light of the world," Jesus says. That is the whole world, at all times. Even 21st-century America. As I knelt in thanksgiving before the statue of Mary in the shrine at Holy Hill, I thought back to the pilgrims at Czestochowa with their Black Madonna. I felt at peace, no longer feeling envy toward them but solidarity. Where I come from, we, too, have Our Lady, and a new pilgrim path on which she guides us to her son.

Vincent Strand, S.J., is a Jesuit priest in doctoral studies in systematic theology at the University of Notre Dame.

The Powers Espionage Trial

The lead character in Steven Spielberg's 2015 thriller "Bridge of Spies," James B. Donovan, was a New York attorney and a prosecutor during the Nuremberg war crime trials in 1945-46. He was also the court-assigned chief defense counsel for Rudolf Ivanovich Abel, a Soviet spy convicted of espionage against the United States in 1957. Donovan closely followed the spy trial of Francis Gary Powers, an American U-2 pilot shot down over the Soviet Union in May 1960. L. C. McHugh, S.J., an associate editor of *America*, interviewed Mr. Donovan about his reactions to the famous U-2 case. The following are excerpts from this interview, which was published on Oct. 29, 1960.

Q: Before we get down to the details of the Powers case, I have two questions about Soviet justice. And first, is it true that Soviet criminal justice sets political aims above human rights or abstract justice?

A: All criminal justice is inherently imperfect, since it is an attempt to effect divine judgments in a human society. However, with its procedural safeguards and the right of trial by jury, criminal law in the United States is well designed to achieve abstract justice. As for Soviet criminal law, we must distinguish between cases that affect the security of the state and other offenses. With respect to the latter, I believe that a reasonable attempt is made to achieve abstract justice, within the framework of Byzantine jurisprudence, on which Soviet law is largely based. But where state security is involved, in the Soviet or any other absolute dictatorship, human rights

are suppressed or obliterated to the degree believed to be required by security interests. The security of the state is given a value transcending the natural and constitutional rights which a defendant always has in our own country.

Q: Are there any other legal differences to keep in mind, when we review the Powers trial?

A: Yes. We should remember that in Soviet Russia a public trial, such as Powers was subjected to, is a planned spectacle. When Moscow decided that the espionage trial should be public, it had already been determined that it would be staged for the edification of the Soviet people. In this respect a public trial, Moscow style, can be likened to a medieval morality play. It is a performance that is not only presented, but presented with a definite purpose. In the Powers case, the obvious purpose was the furtherance of current themes of Soviet propaganda.

Q: Your remarks about planned spectacles and staging seem to imply that the Powers trial was a cut-and-dried affair, do they not?

A: Of course it was cut-and-dried. It was well rehearsed, like any good theatrical production.

•••

Q: Do you think that the Soviet defense attorney made a real attempt to defend his client?

A: Certainly not in the sense in which

we think of a legal defense in the United States. Our concept of common law justice is based on the adversary system—each side is represented by an advocate who forcefully brings out whatever is to the advantage of his side of the case. An impartial judge and jury listen to all the evidence and try to arrive at a fair verdict. This method of arriving at a decision is foreign to the Soviet concept. During the Powers trial, defense counsel Crinyov, like the judges, was simply carrying out his assigned role in the play. His plea for the defendant was probably prepared by a propaganda committee and handed to him a short while before the trial began. That is why Powers was not seen in consultation with his lawyer during the trial. It would have been a pointless and risky interference with the pacing of the drama.

Q: Were you favorably impressed by the conduct of Mr. Powers in the dock?

A: No, and without asking that he be a modern Nathan Hale, I think there were many moments in the trial when his attitude reflected no credit on the United States and in fact embarrassed his country. In all fairness, of course, we couldn't expect too much from a man who was politically naïve and who had been held incommunicado for over a hundred days.... Incidentally, while we're on this point, let me digress a bit. I think that our U-2 flights over Russia were imperative. Knowledge of the location of secret Soviet missile bases behind the Urals, for instance, can be vital to our national survival. There can be no question of expressing regret

for these flights; the intelligence they gave us is essential to informed policy decisions in our relations with Russia.

Q: What do you suppose would have happened in the courtroom, if Powers had dropped his script, so to speak, and made a patriotic defense of his mission over Russia?

A: That question is completely academic. If there had been any real risk to the Soviet [Union] that such a thing would happen, there just wouldn't have been any public trial.

Q: We made U-2 overflights with impunity for some four years. Do you think the plan of the Powers flight was betrayed in advance to the Soviets?

A: It's very doubtful. The Russians were just powerless to do anything about these flights, probably, until some mechanical failure brought the Powers U-2 within the range of their rockets.

...

Q: You defended that Soviet spy, Colonel Abel, back in 1957. Do you think a deal can be made so that if we ship him back to Moscow, Powers returns home in the exchange?

A: Such a deal could not be arranged directly. Russia got considerable propaganda value out of the Powers case. To admit before the world that Abel was a Soviet agent would destroy those gains. But there is a realistic possibility. Suppose some neutral power like India were to offer asylum to Abel, Powers and other

intelligence operatives in the interest of easing world tensions. In this way, without official admissions on either side, some kind of exchange might be possible.

Q: Here's one final question. Suppose the tables were turned. Suppose some Russian U-2 pilot were shot down over Pittsburgh or Oak Ridge, and that you were appointed his counsel. Do you think a good case could be argued against the charge of espionage?

A: I think an intellectually honest defense could be offered under our system. Here is just one point. As there is a three-mile limit in maritime law, and beyond that all enjoy freedom of the seas, so at some distance upward there must be freedom of

space. Since Russia has never agreed to an international convention for determining the limits of sovereignty in space, it could well be argued that since we made U-2 flights for several years without effective let or hindrance, Russia does not control the air space over her borders at the cruising altitude of the U-2. Therefore this region is free in the sense that the sea is free beyond the three-mile limit. In other words, knowledge should be free to the world except as one has good reason to keep it secret.

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Nothing Like ‘Nothing Sacred’

By Nick Ripatrazone

A priest—wracked with doubt, but lifted by faith—struggles to lead his urban parish. Decades-old abuse allegations surface against his beloved mentor. A woman religiously longs to preach and celebrate Mass. A young priest is torn between tradition and a changing church. Locals bemoan the homeless who sleep on the church steps, waiting for the comfort of a meal at a soup kitchen and some time out of the cold. A pair of refugees

flee immigration services by seeking shelter in the church. These stories would make for a great show in 2020; these stories already made for a great show in 1997.

“Nothing Sacred,” a series that ran for one season on ABC, was a gritty, generous vision of the daily life of an urban parish. Created by Bill Cain, a Jesuit priest who collaborated with longtime producer David Manson, the show was—and

remains—groundbreaking.

There has been nothing like it since.

I recently spoke with Father Cain about the show. He had just returned to New York City from Cape May, N.J., where he had gone for a reading of his play, “The Reds,” the story of lifeguards who experienced Hurricane Sandy in 2012. “We were showing people themselves,” Father Cain says of the reading, “and this is



The television show "Nothing Sacred," which aired on ABC from 1997 to 1998, showed that the church is strong enough to survive its internal tensions.

Father Cain treated these characters with respect because they deserve it. This was a world he understood, a world he inhabited. "When you watch the show," says Father Cain, "you're pretty much watching St. Francis Xavier [parish] on 16th Street" in New York City, where he lived for 20 years and where he regularly celebrated Mass. Manson, who had worked with Father Cain on other projects, said he wanted to pitch ABC a series. Father Cain offered three ideas, and Manson immediately jumped on the "urban parish idea."

"We didn't believe the network would make the pilot," Father Cain says. "We didn't believe they'd pick up the series." Tough odds, but he is a deft writer with a graceful touch for sentiment. The cast included the celebrated stage actor Kevin Anderson as Father Ray, a priest who "tries his best" despite his own doubts; Ann Dowd—who has won two Emmy awards for her performance in "The Handmaid's Tale"—as Sister Maureen. Brad Sullivan played Father Leo, who was based on a "very traditional, but deeply humanist" Jesuit brother named Daniel Hoey, from Father Cain's own parish. Bruce Altman plays Sidney, a Jewish accountant whose unbelief in dogma is contrasted with his devotion to the parish's community mission; Tamara Mello is Rachel, a young church secretary who remains committed to the church despite her own struggles. And Scott Mi-

chael Campbell plays Father Eric, a new priest whose idealistic vision is tempered by the realities of church life.

Rolling Stone called "Nothing Sacred" the "best new show" of fall 1997. But the show had an enemy: the Catholic League, which began boycotting the series even before the first episode aired. The boycott managed to rattle ABC. Episodes deemed controversial were changed around, and some were ultimately never aired.

It was a misguided protest. "Nothing Sacred" was a well-written, engaging show about church life that aired on primetime network television. It juxtaposed the theological subtleties of Catholic faith with the literal needs of a parish staff. "Nothing Sacred" should have been embraced as a necessary representation of people of faith—the people who "don't get to see themselves reflected that often." Here was a profoundly Catholic show that laid bare the fault lines of the church while capturing the beauty of belief. It should have been celebrated.

Even its vilification was inaccurate. Father Leo was the show's moral center. No matter the provocative storyline or searing conflict, Father Cain says, "we almost always landed firmly in a deep place of the tradition." He thinks that "one thing that made the show distinctive" is that most episodes "ended with a ritual, whether it was a sacrament or a sacrament-like" event. Among cast and crew, both Catholic and

not a group that gets to see themselves very often."

He might as well have been describing "Nothing Sacred": priests and women religious, a parish secretary and an accountant, a director of religious education. Unless you read the fiction of J. F. Powers or Erin McGraw, you don't often see these characters in stories, and you certainly don't see them in television and film.

‘Nothing Sacred’ took real risks, but that is because Catholicism is a radical affirmation of love, service and Christ.

not, he said, they felt “deep in the spirit of prayer.” After all, “when you do a ritual, suddenly you are invoking God.”

The boycott derailed an essential episode that was originally meant to appear early in the series. The second episode was dedicated to a friend of Father Cain, a priest who died of AIDS. “We wrote it, and then we filmed it, and then ABC said they wouldn’t show it,” he says. That is a shame; it is an episode worth celebrating.

Early in the episode, we see a photo of Ray with his seminary class, with Xs drawn through some of their faces, marking those who had left the priesthood. In “Nothing Sacred,” being a priest is a tough but essential job. Father Ray tells that to Father Jesse, a friend who hasn’t been celebrating Mass at his own parish. Jesse has good reason: He has AIDS and is struggling with both illness and a feeling that he is unworthy. Father Cain writes snappy, dark, self-deprecating humor in the exchanges between Ray and Jesse, a powerful contrast with Jesse’s honesty toward the end of the episode, when he admits to a number of priests that he is gay.

In the final scene, Ray and Jesse

sit together, knowing the end is near. Ray compares Jesse to Christ, a man who also knew he was going to die; how Jesus took bread, broke it and gave it to his friends and said—and here Jesse answers—“Remember me.” His voice’s hesitancy places his words somewhere between a statement and a question.

What a dramatic, powerful, *Catholic* scene. And the audience never saw it.

“Nothing Sacred” took real risks, but that is because Catholicism, in its most visceral, public form, is a radical affirmation of love, service and Christ. In the episode “Hodie Christus Natus Est,” Father Eric wants to celebrate an ordinary Midnight Mass, but his plan is upended when a refugee family from El Salvador seeks sanctuary in the church. One of the refugees tells the story of the El Mozote massacre, which Father Cain admits is “quite a thing to get on television.” The episode ends with three celebrations of Christmas. The priests break bread in jail after tussling with police and immigration officials; the refugees gather in the back of a restaurant, “having a eucharistic meal”; and then Sister Mo leads a prayer service at the church.

Perhaps the episode closest to

Father Cain’s heart is “Felix Culpa.” “We were told that we were being cancelled,” he says. “I was as tired as I could be, and we really wanted to say what the church is.... The idea being, if you get back to basics, if the building goes away, if all of the other things go away, what do you finally have?”

The church is set aflame by Father Eric’s faulty preparation for the Easter service (he uses too much lighter fluid when setting up the vigil fire) and nearly burns down. Haunted by his mistake, he can’t bring himself to give the homily at Easter Mass until Father Ray consoles him. “It’s hard being alive,” Father Eric finally begins the homily. “Believing enough, just to keep living.” He wonders if Jesus was happiest when he was dead, when he thought his suffering had ended. “God put his mouth to his son’s ear and said, ‘No. I choose you. My son, my beloved. Wake up. Come to me. I’m not done loving you yet.’” Father Cain tells me his goal as a writer is “to show people the greatness that is hidden from them.” That spirit sustains every episode of the series.

“Nothing Sacred” deserves a wider audience. (All episodes can be found on YouTube.) The series masterfully captures the melancholy and joy of parish life and shows the church is strong and elastic enough to survive its tensions. Here is the rare television series that shows there is room and hope enough for all of us.

Nick Ripatrazone has written for *Rolling Stone*, *The Atlantic*, *The Paris Review* and *Esquire*. His upcoming book is *Longing for an Absent God: Faith and Doubt in Great American Fiction* (Fortress Press).

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Kicking the Can Down the Road

By Amit Majmudar

You've been
walking backwards
for so long

it doesn't feel
so awkward
anymore.

In fact, it has
become the norm
to claim your side

just scored. The goal
has always been
to pass along

the road from
Washington
to nowhere,

this can that's
taken on
the contour

of an intricately
dinted, infinitely
polyhedral

soccer ball.
You're hoping
there's some road

to go yet
so that when it's
your turn

you won't turn
to find a wall,
given that all

the experts
you have heard
have warned

that the can,
once opened,
is sure to air

a generation's
worth of
worms

and that whoever
opens it
will be the one

who has to blink
into the light
and squirm.



Amit Majmudar is a diagnostic nuclear radiologist who lives in Westerville, Ohio. His newest book is a verse translation of the *Bhagavad-Gita* entitled *Godsong*.

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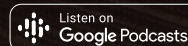
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Anna and the Blind Tobit, c. 1630 by Rembrandt van Rijn



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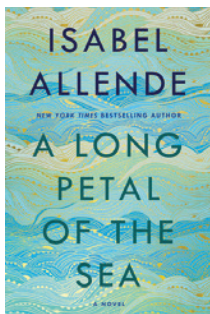




AP Photo

The reverberations of war

By Ellen O'Connell Whittet



A Long Petal of the Sea

By Isabel Allende
Ballantine Books
336p \$28

By the time Isabel Allende's *A Long Petal of the Sea* opens in 1938, half a million refugees have begun to walk from Spain across the French border, fleeing from their own homeland in order to escape Francisco Franco's violence. The novel begins with violent displacement, describing in detail the families ripped apart and soldiers killed in battle through one family's story of survival and hope.

A member of the Republican army, the 23-year-old medical student Victor Dalmau is among the refugees; and although he loses track of

his mother and brother, presuming them both dead, he finds (and spends the next several decades holding onto) Roser Brughera, the mother of his brother's son. The entwined lives of Victor and Roser make up the arc of Allende's new novel, their loss and rebuilding spanning continents and wars as they cling to each other, each character becoming the only place the other truly belongs.

Writing a novel of profound displacement can, perhaps, best be done by someone who knows this as her permanent state. Allende has been a foreigner since her birth, when her parents were Chilean diplomats, and later when she was a political refugee following Pinochet's 1973 coup in Chile. Allende lives now in California, displaced not only from the physical home of her ancestors, but from the language, history and culture she carries with her. In fact, this sense of not belonging is the recurring core of much of Allende's

fiction, and it situates her identity as a Latin American writer within larger transnational literary traditions. "The theme of displacement is very natural for me," Allende told *The Guardian* in 2015. "It always comes up in my books because I have been a foreigner all my life, and I don't feel I belong anywhere. I'm an immigrant."

Just after Victor Dalmau marries the pregnant Roser Brughera, they set sail on the SS Winnipeg. This French steamer actually existed; the Chilean president once charged the poet Pablo Neruda to fill it with Spanish refugees to whom he was offering asylum in Chile. In September of 1939, the Winnipeg set sail for Chile carrying 2,200 Spaniards who had been held in French internment camps. On the night the steamer set sail, Neruda wrote: "The critics may erase all of my poetry, if they want./ But this poem, that today I remember, nobody will be able to erase."

In the novel, the ship docks in Valparaiso, Chile, the land that Neruda later described as “the long petal of sea and wine and snow.” There, Victor, Roser and their baby set about rebuilding their lives, finding their place in a strange, new land, and creating a sense of home in a country headed for its own unrest. “The passengers’ anxiety came close to collective hysteria: more than two thousand eager faces crowded onto the upper deck, waiting for the moment to set foot on this unknown land,” Allende writes.

In Chile, the Dalmaus’ lives intersect with a Chilean family they meet, the influential Del Solars, a conservative and devoutly Catholic family whose ideologies clash with those of the Dalmaus. Victor and Roser’s marriage is one of fraternal love and convenience—they got married so they could both escape Europe on the brink of war. But once in Chile, Victor falls in love with Ofelia Del Solar, one of the family’s daughters. The depth and complication of their love story ends quickly but the story does not completely unfurl until the novel’s final pages. For one thing, Ofelia must keep the romance a secret from her disapproving family. For another, Victor is married to Roser. “Not even the irresistible temptation of eloping with Ofelia to a palm-fronded paradise could make him leave Roser or her child,” Allende writes.

Allende grew up hearing stories of the SS Winnipeg from her grandfather, who was one of the Spanish immigrants aboard the ship. Many years later she heard similar stories from another Chilean exile in Venezuela, where she lived after Pinochet’s ascent to power, named Victor Pey. Forty years later she developed the story he had told her

into *A Long Petal of the Sea*. The novel, she says in her acknowledgments, because of her own exhaustive research and correspondence with Pey, seemed to write itself as though it were being dictated to her. Although the story and its characters are fictionalized, the historical and personal events on which it is based make the novel read like a non-fiction account.

Pey returned to Chile in 1989 once democracy was restored and General Pinochet stepped down. Pey spent years corresponding with Allende about the details of life during the Spanish Civil War and his memory of the battles, his exile to the French concentration camps that housed Spanish refugees, his voyage aboard the SS Winnipeg and arrival in Valparaiso, and his relationship with both Neruda and President Salvador Allende, Isabel Allende’s godfather and the first cousin of her father. The novel is dedicated “to Victor Pey Casado and other navigators of hope.” Pey died at the age of 103 years, less than a week before Allende’s manuscript, the novel inspired by his life, was ready to be sent to him.

The juxtapositions—of belonging and exile, sorrow and redemption, personal and political—create tension in the book that propels the narrative forward through decades and generations. Allende’s writing manages to be sweeping in its scope while maintaining its tight focus on the lives of just a few characters. The book begins with just such a juxtaposition, with Victor’s last-minute rescue of a young soldier he refers to as Lazaro. “This was to be his most stubborn, persistent memory of the war: that fifteen or sixteen year-old boy, still smooth-cheeked, filthy with the dirt of battle and dried blood, laid out on a stretcher with his heart

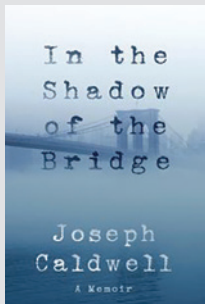
exposed to the air,” Allende writes.

Victor reaches into the boy’s chest cavity and massages the heart, bringing him back to life. “Many called it a miracle,” Victor learns. “The advances of science and the boy’s constitution of an ox, claimed those who had renounced God and his saints.” Allende often pairs life and death within a single sentence, and thus shows Victor’s despair, which lives right alongside his ever-growing sense of purpose in the face of great terror and violence.

The multi-decade scope of the novel means Allende’s attention to historical dates, events and figures can make it difficult for some of the more emotional scenes to fully take hold. Victor’s imprisonment in Chile, for example, rushes by, the terror of his capture and confinement sacrificed in the author’s haste to move on to the next stage of political turmoil. Allende jumps over entire years within single paragraphs, and by the end of the characters’ journeys, the small moments of finding each other and reflecting on the years happen quickly and unceremoniously.

Still, the novel provides a compelling look at how war can reverberate for a lifetime, how it swallows people, and even how the survivors are walking wounded. At its heart, *A Long Petal of the Sea* is just that—a story of survival, and a love story between people and place, a story of how the displaced find meaning and community. It could not be more timely.

Ellen O’Connell Whittet teaches in the Writing Program at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Her ballet memoir, *What You Become in Flight*, is due in spring 2020 from Melville House.



In The Shadow of the Bridge

By Joseph Caldwell
Delphinium
200p \$24

Life as a gift

When challenged by a friend in the 1960s about why he didn't take his church's peace teachings more seriously, the playwright and author Joseph Caldwell dragged him to a protest led by Dorothy Day. The pair were awed by the sight of her.

"Unlike most celebrities, she looked just like her pictures—somewhat tall but not imposing, the gray hair with the braid circling her head, the high cheekbones, her expression both thoughtful and relaxed. Maybe 'patient' is the best way to describe it."

That is how Joseph Caldwell recalls his foray into the Catholic Worker Movement, chronicled in his new book, *In the Shadow of the Bridge*. Caldwell is not the first Catholic of a certain age to recall wistfully their experience in the peace movement. What makes this book unique is his unabashed Catholicism juxtaposed with a fearless openness about his own sexuality.

"I am close to being a congenital Catholic," Caldwell writes. "It's almost encoded in my genes to the same degree and with the same imperatives as my homosexuality." He avoids the temptation to dwell on the challenges he has faced as a gay Catholic, but he does not entirely shy away from them either.

"My faith has never felt dangerously challenged, even by my having been duly informed by the Roman hierarchy that I am—by choice no less—an abomination," he writes.

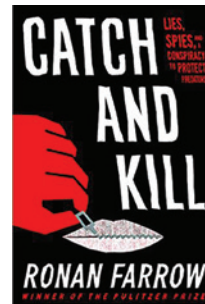
With a style that at times evokes the memoirist David Sedaris, Caldwell recalls his own Catholic boyhood with fondness, particularly lessons instilled by his parents. He remembers a long-term houseguest who became pregnant and then left for a short trip, apparently to have an abortion. He recalls the moment he raised the matter with his mother.

"My mother's response was quiet but firm and I can quote her words without revision. 'We don't know that. All we know is that she's lost her baby. And if she *did* have an abortion, doesn't that mean she needs us more than ever?'"

Living in New York in the 1980s and '90s, Caldwell was attuned to the plight of gay men suffering from H.I.V. and AIDS. These episodes account for some of the most moving in the book.

The challenges notwithstanding, Caldwell presents his life as a gay Catholic as a gift. "I have come to see my homosexuality as a form of grace," he writes. "Because of my outcast state, I was forced to think for myself."

Michael J. O'Loughlin is *national correspondent and host of the America Media podcast* "Plague: Untold Stories of AIDS and the Catholic Church."



Catch and Kill Lies, Spies, and a Conspiracy to Protect Predators

By Ronan Farrow
Little, Brown
464p \$30

Structures of deceit

In October 2017, *The New Yorker* published Ronan Farrow's now-famous story identifying the Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein as the perpetrator of numerous acts of sexual assault and harassment against women in the film industry. Weinstein is facing sex crime charges in Los Angeles and is currently on trial in New York City.

In *Catch and Kill*, Farrow tells the story of his experience reporting that Harvey Weinstein story, starting in October 2016. Although the story eventually ran in print in *The New Yorker*, he had originally pitched it while employed by NBC News to run on television with the goal of featuring Weinstein's accusers in video interviews. According to Farrow's account, at almost every stage of his pursuit of the story he and his producer, Rich McHugh, encountered roadblocks from NBC's leadership.

Farrow eventually uncovered multiple systems that were at work to prevent his reporting and the exposure of the abuse perpetrated by Weinstein. Network executives sought to preserve friendly relationships with Weinstein, influenced by both his threats and his gifts. Weinstein's team, including his lawyers and a private espionage company, hounded Farrow and some of his sources, hoping to

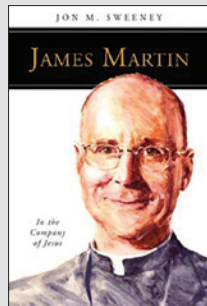
discourage him and to intimidate survivors who were coming forward to tell their stories. Following Farrow's reporting, news broke about the abuse perpetrated by Matt Lauer at NBC. It became clear that the leadership at NBC had tried to kill Farrow's reporting without appearing to do so in order to prevent Weinstein from going public with knowledge about Lauer's perpetration of abuse while at the television network.

The book reads like a thriller, but the threats to Farrow and the survivors willing to come forward were not imaginary. Neither were (are?) the machinations of the powerful to protect themselves and their access to power. *Catch and Kill* may be a page-turner, but it is ultimately not entertainment. The story it tells is all too real.

The center of Farrow's analysis is not only the violence of predators like Weinstein and Lauer, but more significantly the systems and cultures that protected them and allowed them to continue to abuse the women around them. These systems and cultures were able to function because of the work that many people put in to uphold them. Farrow challenges the reader to question his or her own involvement in subtle systems and cultures that allow this kind of abuse.

What abuse do we allow to continue? What cultures and systems do we leave in place because it is beneficial to our own interests to do so?

Megan K. McCabe is an assistant professor at Gonzaga University in Spokane, Wash.



James Martin
In the Company
of Jesus
By Jon M. Sweeney
Liturgical Press
208p \$16.95

Writer and priest

The struggles involved in writing a biography of a living person are similar to the struggles that go into writing a profile. On the one hand, the person is readily available for interviews, fact-checking and providing background materials. On the other hand, the person you are writing about is always hovering over your shoulder like the recording angel.

It is refreshing that Jon Sweeney's biography of James Martin, S.J., (full disclosure, I know and have worked with both) feels more like a conversation than a celebrity profile. Granted, most readers will pick up this book because of the size of Father Martin's audience. A "celebrity priest" in 2020 is an anomaly. And there are fewer members of the Catholic clergy every year. When many Americans encounter Father Martin on The Colbert Report or CNN, writing for The New York Times or on his social media, they may have never actually interacted with a priest before.

Sweeney's emphasis throughout the book is on the fact that in spite of how much his audience has grown, Father Martin's ministry has remained focused on the pastoral. Jesus is mentioned more in this book than those unfamiliar with

Ignatian spiritual direction might expect. Sweeney also makes it clear that Father Martin sees his writing as a form of spiritual direction. Father Martin's books, podcasts, social media posts and articles largely focus in one way or another on helping the reader to develop his or her relationship with God, and his particular emphasis on following and building a closer relationship with Jesus is, well, jesuitical, in the root sense of the word.

Sweeney's job in this book is not to do a deep dive or an academic analysis. His focus is very much on the parallel evolutions of Father Martin as a writer and as a priest, so the book moves back and forth between those two intertwined branches. For those who have read Father Martin's memoirs, there may be some repetition, but Sweeney contextualizes the biography within the story of a spiritual evolution.

But most will come away having met or learned more about someone who has a clear vision of his ministry. That may not sound like much; there are, after all, still religious people all around us. But in spiritual direction, the emphasis is not just on us as individuals. It is on seeking a relationship with our creator. What Sweeney's book ultimately gives us is a deeper understanding of the life of someone who has helped many people develop and deepen that relationship.

Kaya Oakes, a contributing writer for *America*, teaches writing at the University of California, Berkeley, and is the author of *The Nones Are Alright*.

Jane Austen gets a makeover

By Rob Weinert-Kendt

“Sanditon” is best seen as a kind of greatest-hits compilation of 19th-century period tropes.

Pandering fan service isn't just for “Star Wars” or the Marvel universe. What was last year's “Downton Abbey” film if not a giant Fabergé Easter egg for PBS-watching Anglophiles? The audience that craves the sight of ornate house furnishings and the sound of snappy bon mots delivered by dowagers or fops, and which prefers its romance smoldering and sublimated, is no less particular in its tastes than the most exacting sci-fi fanboy.

But can you have fan service for a popular author's brand, rather than a comic-book franchise? The author in question is Jane Austen, and the case in point is “Sanditon,” an eight-part TV series very freely inspired by her unfinished final novel, which recently aired on PBS. The reaction from Janeites when the show aired last fall in the United Kingdom was less than warm, in part because the series creator, Andrew Davies, played fast and loose with Austen's admittedly sketchy plot. He also made explicit

much of what is implicit in English novels of the period, including matters of sex, race and class, and introduced lurid plot elements straight out of Gothic novels: a dramatic deathbed confession, a tragic fire, a sexed-up love triangle among scheming would-be heirs.

“Sanditon” is best seen—and enjoyed, to an extent—as a kind of greatest hits compilation of 19th-century period tropes, artfully tailored for folks who like that sort of thing. Some of the show's gambits are true to classic Austen, like the female camaraderie that forms between Charlotte Heywood (Rose Williams), a bright young farm girl, and Georgiana Lambe (Crystal Clarke), an heiress from the West Indies, or the textbook hate-warming-to-love relationship Charlotte forms with Sidney Parker (Theo James), a rich playboy chastened into responsibility when his brother plunges disastrously into debt.

Charlotte, on hand for an indef-

inite visit to the beach town of the show's title, quickly insinuates herself into Sanditon's bustling affairs with a combination of can-do pluck and curiosity. Praised often, and only occasionally scolded, for speaking her mind and offering well-meaning advice to all comers, Charlotte is a kind of too-good-to-be-true period-film pixie, less evocative of Austen's Elizabeth Bennet or Emma Woodhouse than of a Disney heroine. Williams is never less than watchable in the role, though, and her romantic chemistry with James' Sidney is so overpoweringly obvious it's almost funny.

Along the way there is a cricket match and a regatta, a few assorted balls, a medical demonstration by a comic-opera German doctor and much clattering of horse-drawn carriages and strolls on the beach. Less fully developed, even half-hearted, are a few plot strands that bring class and race to the forefront in a way that feels more like Thomas Hardy or one of the



PBS

Brontës than Austen. Georgian’s would-be fiancé, Otis Molyneux (Jyuddah Jaymes), is a formerly enslaved black man, manifestly unwelcome in the lily-white town, though his relationship with his intended ultimately founders for more prosaic reasons than racism.

Davies, an old hand with a stellar track record of adapting Austen and Dickens, clearly knows what he’s doing, even as he indulges in some eye-roll-worthy excesses. At one point a young suitor gallantly assures Esther that he will not injure her “self-worth,” an unlikely

formulation for the period. And when two malefactors conduct an illicit assignation on a tiled floor decorated with a giant snake, we may think we have suddenly switched the channel to “Rome.”

But there is no denying the special pleasure of putting ourselves in the hands of a storyteller so steeped in his material that he feels free to riff and extrapolate, mixing clichés into a hearty stew along with fresh spices and flavors. If we’re going to be pandered to, we might as well have it done this well.

I am not sure whether to see the series’ unexpectedly tearful and unresolved ending as bold, subversive truth-telling about the economic pressures of the patriarchy or as a cynical ploy to set up a second season. But I like “Sanditon” well enough—and know myself well enough—to concede that I would gladly binge another season of vaguely Austen-related trifles.

Rob Weinert-Kendt is the editor of *American Theatre* magazine.

The call of faith in ‘Messiah’



The Netflix series imagines how the modern world would respond to Christ’s return.

Netflix

If Jesus Christ were to return to initiate an apocalypse in the Year of Our Lord 2019, how would we receive him? “Messiah” may have a prophetic vision. The provocative 10-part Netflix series imagines how the modern world would respond to Christ’s eschatological return or, conversely, how Christ would respond to globalized tension and social indifference toward marginalized groups in the modern world.

In “Messiah,” the titular Christ figure, Al-Masih (played by Mehdi Dehbi), inspires hope among the faithful by performing what appear to be miracles and prophesying about an inevitable Judgment Day. He also rouses suspicion among the skeptical, particularly the C.I.A. agent Eva Geller (Michelle Monaghan), who believes that Al-Masih is not the divine prophet he claims to be. The agnostic’s doubt is what drives the show’s fundamental question: Is Al-Masih really the Messiah the world has been waiting for, or is he actually a false shepherd leading his flock astray?

The show’s insistence on allowing the viewer to choose what they believe about Al-Masih’s character makes the very act of watching “Messiah” a kind

of exercise of faith. You are not isolated from the ongoing challenge of acceptance or rejection that the show’s characters experience throughout the series; you are also a part of the narrative.

But what ultimately makes “Messiah” a compelling series is not Al-Masih himself but how the other characters respond in faith when their conception of reality is tested. Take the subplot of Jibril, a refugee who holds on tightly to the belief that Al-Masih has set him on God’s path. Jibril never loses sight of his conviction, even when he is tortured by Israeli operatives and left to die in the desert. As a result, Jibril’s trust in God moves him to act righteously; he becomes a spiritual leader in his own right, using his faith to continue advocating for justice.

Jibril’s story is only one of several threads that make up a rich, intricate tapestry of responses to the call of faith in “Messiah.” In the end, it does not matter whether Al-Masih is the Messiah or not; it is what his followers choose to do with their faith that gives his ministry relevance.

Isabelle Senechal, *Joseph A. O’Hare, S.J., fellow.*

Encountering God

Readings: Gn 12:1-4; Ps 33; 2 Tm 1:8-10; Mt 17:1-9

The first reading from Genesis and the Gospel from Matthew each describe an experience of human encounters with God. Abram (later Abraham) receives a divine calling, and Peter, James and John witness Jesus' transfiguration. These extraordinary events remind us to look for God's presence in our lives.

In the first reading, God calls Abram to be a migrant, commanding him to leave his home and travel to an unknown land. If he fulfills this divine command, Abram is to be blessed with a great nation, and all nations will be blessed through him (Gn 12:2-3). Abram answers this calling, even without knowing what he might encounter along the way. As we journey through Lent, we can take inspiration from Abram's willingness to follow God's word and work to live lives that are guided by God.

Most of us will not receive a direct command from God as Abram did, yet each day we experience God in our lives. Abram's encounter reminds us to look for God in our lives. Moreover, Abram is said to be a blessing for others which reveals the power and influence one person can have on the lives of many.

In the Gospel reading from Matthew, Peter, James and John witness the transfiguration of Jesus. Their shared experience of this event allows them to more fully understand and realize God's presence in their lives. Matthew presents the transfiguration as a physical and spiritual transformation that communicates Jesus' significance to his followers and links him to past and future traditions. Physically, Jesus' face "shone like the sun" and his clothes became "white as light" (Mt 17:2). This theophany (a physical manifestation of God) occurs on a mountain and has parallels to traditions about Moses and Elijah, who both encounter God on mountains in the Old Testament. Moses' face even became radiant when he encountered God when receiving the law (Ex 34:29, 35).

Peter, James and John are clearly stunned by what they witness, as they fall on their faces out of respect and likely genuine fear (Mt 17:6). Together they experience a vision that connects Jesus to the Jewish law and prophets,

His face shone like the sun and his clothes became white as light. (Mt 17:2)



PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

What can you do to increase your faith in God?

Do you seek to encounter God in your daily life?

Are you listening for God's calling?

represented by Moses and Elijah. As we have heard over the past two Sundays, Matthew depicts Jesus as a Jewish teacher and interpreter who came to fulfill the law and prophets, not to abolish them (Mt 5:17). Today Matthew reveals Jesus as the fulfillment of the law and the prophets by depicting him alongside Moses and Elijah during this transformative event.

Just as the transfiguration connects Jesus to the past, it also foreshadows his future glory in the resurrection. When Jesus makes his first resurrection appearance to Mary Magdalene, his clothes are white as snow (Mt 28:3), as they are at the transfiguration. Likewise, Jesus instructs the apostles not to report the transfiguration until after his resurrection, when the event would take on a more significant meaning.

As we continue through Lent, today's readings allow us to reflect on our encounters with God. Abram's faithfulness to God can be a model for how we should react when we receive a divine call, and Abram also reminds us of the impact our lives can have on others. Peter, James and John, while stunned by the vision of the transfiguration, remind us to continue to prepare ourselves to encounter Jesus in the resurrection.

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A Biblical Model for Women Preachers

Readings: Ex 17:3-7; Ps 95; Rom 5:1-2, 5-8; Jn 4:5-42

Today's Gospel is long and important. There is a shorter Lectionary option, but reading the full narrative of the woman at the well is crucial to understanding her significance. She is an open, engaged recruiter of disciples in Christ, and she is a model for women preachers.

Jesus meets an unnamed Samaritan woman at a well. When Jesus requests water from her, she notes the potential impropriety of their interaction. A Jewish man speaking to a Samaritan woman would be scandalous on account of their different religious traditions and sexes. Even Jesus' disciples note the scandal when they arrive on the scene, "amazed" that Jesus would speak to a woman (Jn 4:27), pushing past the societal boundaries of his time.

Jesus reveals his purpose for requesting water. The water enables him to speak symbolically about himself as "living water" that provides eternal life (Jn 4:10, 14). This exchange serves as an invitation for the woman to believe in Jesus, and she responds with sincerity and openness.

Abruptly, Jesus instructs her to call her husband, and he asserts that she has had five husbands. Some interpreters have

criticized this woman as being sexually immoral or a prostitute. Not so. There is certainly no indication of either in the text, and it is important to work against such assumptions, which serve only to diminish this woman by treating her as a source of scandal because of her relationships with men.

The text does not tell us why she has five husbands. Some assume she has been divorced multiple times, so Jesus' statement could imply that her most recent relationship is illegitimate. However, she could be a widow who married her brothers-in-law, according to the custom called levirate marriage (Dt 25:5-10). She could be a widow who married close kinsmen (Ru 4:1-17).

Whatever the reason, Jesus mentions her husbands not to criticize her but to show that he intimately knows her. Recognizing the significance of Jesus as a prophet, the woman takes the opportunity to discuss differences between Jews and Samaritans. She confidently professes belief in the coming of the Messiah, leading Jesus to reveal his identity to her, saying "I am he, the one speaking with you" (Jn 4:26).

The woman immediately departs, going into the city saying: "Come and see a man who told me everything I have done. Could he possibly be the Christ?" (Jn 4:29). Her assertion and question prompt people to go find out more about Jesus. Her preaching motivates her community, and many "began to believe in him because of the word of the woman who testified, 'He told me everything I have done'" (Jn 4:39). After encountering Jesus themselves, the Samaritans invite him to stay with them, and they begin to believe that he is the Messiah.

Today's Gospel reveals the power of women preachers. Jesus' invitation to this woman is countercultural and sparks a transformative ministry to the Samaritans. The woman is an example of Christian witness and discipleship, and church leaders should heed the wisdom of the Gospel and the Lectionary which puts this passage at the center of our Lenten journey.

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

Many of the Samaritans began to believe because of the word of the woman.
(Jn 4:39)

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

How can you promote women in Church leadership?

What can you do to welcome new people into your faith community?

Are you willing to be bold like Christ to overcome discriminatory practices?

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Bite-Sized Spirituality

Pizza nights on campus with St. Ignatius

By Joe Laramie



I am a campus minister at my alma mater, Saint Louis University, a Jesuit school. My time at S.L.U. helped me to develop a deeper, more mature relationship with Christ. I am trying to help college students do the same.

In 2000, I entered the Jesuit novitiate. I had many positive encounters with Jesuits at S.L.U. I took courses from older Jesuits on human nature and postmodern philosophy. I also worked with young Jesuits on retreats and service projects. At other times, we just chatted over lunch or coffee on campus. They were like big brothers to me: smart, fun and generous. I have stayed friends with many of these men; and now I am a Jesuit, too.

On a cool Wednesday night in October, I am hosting Taste of Ignatius. Over five weeks, I guide students through several meditations from the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola. We look at the examen, gratitude and the “First Principle and Foundation.” Around 10 to 15 students show up on an average week. Some come once. Some never miss. There are freshmen and seniors, Catholic, Christian, other and “not sure.” A Hindu student brings a buddy.

I try to keep it positive, keep it moving and make sure it does not feel like school. I bring pizzas. We eat and introduce ourselves. I offer a little nugget from St. Ignatius, mix in a few Dad jokes, a quote from Scripture and

a personal example. It is bite-sized spirituality. Pope Francis writes about ministry to youth in his apostolic exhortation, “Christus Vivit.” He says:

While adults often worry about having everything properly planned, with regular meetings and fixed times, most young people today have little interest in this kind of pastoral approach. Youth ministry needs to become more flexible: inviting young people to events or occasions that provide an opportunity not only for learning, but also for conversing, celebrating, singing, listening to real stories and experiencing a shared encounter with the living God (No. 204).

That is what I am shooting for here: the new evangelization. We are talking about God, life, joys, sorrows, prayer and Jesus. The Holy Spirit comes and stays the whole time. All are welcome. Ignatius is our guide. I do want attendees to deepen their relationship with Christ; he does, too.

I am always struck by their quiet, diligent prayer. Some pray daily, make a holy hour each week and catch a few weekday Masses. For others, this might be the only quiet 15 minutes in

their week—when they are not in a lab, scrolling through social media, watching Netflix, at the gym or working at a job. Many are burdened by the relentless competition of grades and internet “likes.” If you give them the opportunity and a little encouragement, they can downshift to a different gear. I think about the Jesuits who reached out to me when I was in college. As St. Ignatius says, “Go in their door.” That is what they did for me. I am trying to do something similar with these weekly gatherings.

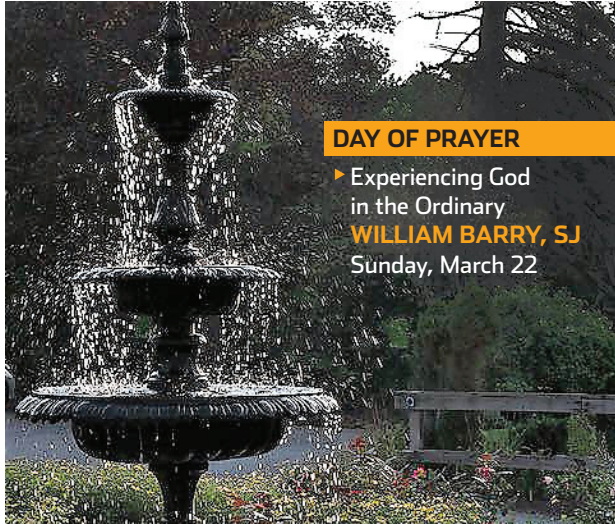
This is not Mass, but it is in continuity with Mass. While they are gathered, they share each other’s graces, filling their own cups to the brim from their friends’ overflow. The blessings are doubled and the sorrows halved.

The hour ends, and we close with a prayer. A few stick around to chat. Some ask to meet with me individually later in the week. They are out in the cool, dark evening, ready to share a sip of this mini-retreat with friends on campus.

Joe Laramie, S.J., is a campus minister at Saint Louis University. He is the author of *Abide in the Heart of Christ: a 10-Day Personal Retreat With St Ignatius Loyola*. Information and excerpts at joelaramiesj.com. Twitter: @JoeLaramieSJ.



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