

America

MARCH 18, 2019

THE JESUIT REVIEW OF FAITH AND CULTURE

SPECIAL SPORTS ISSUE

RUNNING FOR THE POPE

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Of Liturgies and Line Drives

Matt Malone, S.J., is traveling abroad. But I also suspect he let me be the pinch-hitter for this column in **America's** special sports issue out of pity. Major League Baseball's spring training is in full swing, after all, and not a day goes by that I am not reminded that his favorite team, the Boston Red Sox, pummelled my beloved Los Angeles Dodgers in last year's World Series. I would like to say he was a good sport about it, then and now, but you know, dear reader, it is a sin to tell a lie. So let's just accept this gesture as recompense.

I am on pins and needles concerning another baseball matter these days: the ongoing free agency of Bartolo Colón, the husky hurler who started his major league career with the Cleveland Indians in 1997 (the year our youngest **America** employee was born) and went on to pitch for the Montreal Expos, the Chicago White Sox (twice), the Anaheim Angels (no, they are not from Los Angeles and I shan't indulge their fiction), the aforementioned Boston Red Sox, the New York Yankees, the Oakland Athletics, the New York Mets, the Atlanta Braves, the Minnesota Twins and, last year, the Texas Rangers.

He is a four-time All-Star and a Cy Young Award winner. Also, he weighs 285 pounds. In 2018, an opposing hitter scorched a 102-m.p.h. line drive directly at Mr. Colón. He, *mirabile dictu*, stopped it cold with his gut and threw the runner out, with no apparent discomfort. "I have a lot of big belly," he told reporters after the game. "I can take it."

Oh, and he has a nickname: Big Sexy.

These are all sound arguments for why one should love Bartolo Colón, but I want a team to sign him for the 2019 season for a more self-ish reason. At 45 years of age, he is the only active major league baseball player who is older than I. And I am still young as long as he's still playing, aren't I? One more year, Big Sexy. One more year.

Why do sports—even just in the watching—make us feel young even when we're old? Are they our last remaining links to childhood, to care-free and unstructured leisure? To innocence?

The most famous baseball player of all time was universally known as the Babe; the hitter with the sweetest swing you ever saw was nicknamed the Kid. When the 1919 Chicago "Black Sox" threw the World Series, their greatest crime in the eyes of the country was their theft of the innocence of their young fans. Remember the boy pleading with Shoeless Joe Jackson? "Say it ain't so, Joe! Say it ain't so!"

Are professional sports the only acceptable realm where adults are still allowed to have heroes? Sales of N.B.A. jerseys last year topped \$2 billion, all sold to folks who want to wear a shirt in public with someone else's name on it. Or does playing or watching sports provide a socially conditioned outlet for the baser instincts of our nature? George Orwell thought so. "Serious sport has nothing to do with fair play," he once wrote. "It is bound up with hatred, jealousy, boastfulness, disregard of all rules and sadistic pleasure in witnessing violence. In other words, it is war minus the shooting."

Other thinkers—Marshall McLuhan among them—would disagree, finding in sporting events some of the elements that allow a culture to understand itself. "The advantage of coverage of sports events is they are ritualistic," McLuhan once said. "People have the feeling of participating as a group in a great meaningful ritual. And it doesn't much matter who wins. That isn't the point."

McLuhan was a bit off, of course (It doesn't matter who wins? Please.). But his central point holds: We as a culture need rituals, rites of passage, liturgies, litanies. They provide some of the connective tissue between eras, between parents and kids, between neighbors, even between nations.

And it is worth noting that the age at which we start to take sports seriously—as something really worth doing or watching, as opposed to just "fun" or "minimizing screen time"—is exactly at that point when our children become adults. We don't want them to go off to war, necessarily, but we want to see our sons and daughters show their valor as warriors. And yes, we all want to feel young again.

One more year, Big Sexy. One more year.

James T. Keane is a senior editor at *America Media*.
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AP Photo/Peter Morrison

The media photograph costumed demonstrators at a mock wall on the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, near the town of Newry in Northern Ireland, Jan. 26. The United Kingdom is scheduled to officially leave the European Union on March 29.

Cover: CNS photo/Paul Haring

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MADONNA BUDER

The “Iron Nun” on God, triathlons and aging

Do you believe that sports build character?

When asked if sports build character, 75 percent of respondents said yes and 25 percent said no.

“I have coached high school athletes for 52 years,” said Thomas Sexton of Philadelphia, Pa. “I see them learn and grow in so many ways.”

Dozens of respondents expressed similar views, noting that many people participate in sports during adolescence, a critical period of growth and development.

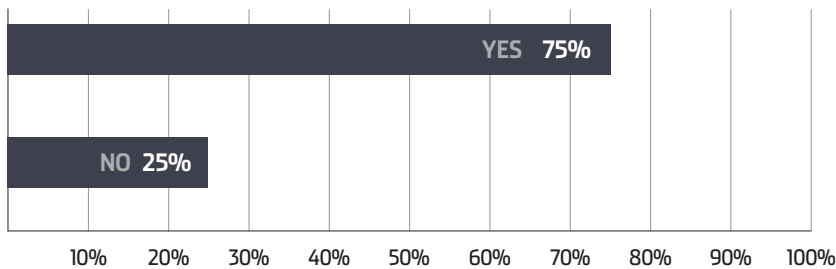
Asked what about sports helps to build character, readers pointed to a number of aspects. Thirty-nine percent said athletes learn about teamwork; 33 percent said athletes learn to deal with failure; and 23 percent said sports do not teach character. Five percent said athletes learn social skills.

“Athletes learn about sacrificing for a greater goal,” wrote Kevin Pulliam of South Bend, Ind.

Dissenters pointed to the competitive spirit intrinsic to sports. “Sports build character no more than any other program that requires us to make a commitment and strive to improve ourselves,” said Sue Sack of Dayton, Ohio. “All too often, it seems, they instead build a society of people who, as observers, encourage the growth of excessive competition and ego in others.”

Some readers emphasized that while sports have the potential to build character, it is not guaranteed. “Unless coaches explicitly address these concepts, neither true learning nor character building takes place,” wrote Donald Sprague of Chicago, Ill.

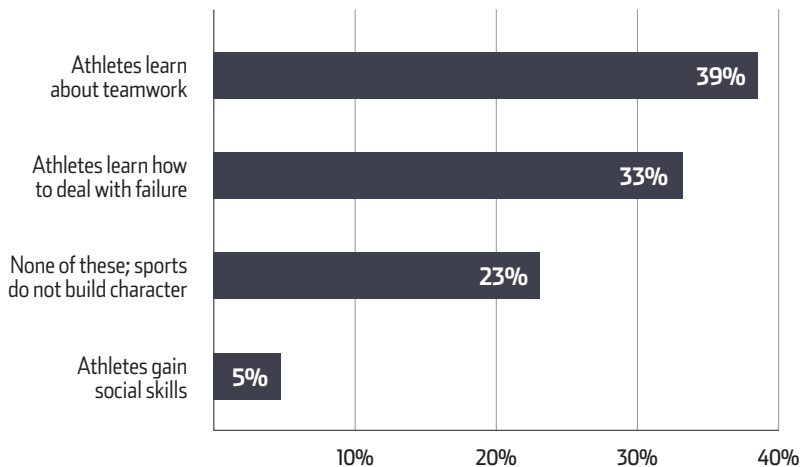
Do you think that sports build character?



Athletes learn that in order to achieve a goal they need to work with others.

Carol Peterson
Yorktown, N.Y.

How do sports build character?



Sports allow you to understand why failure happens, how to deal with it and how to avoid repeating it.

Rodolfo Soriano-Nunez
Mexico City, Mexico

These results are based on reader responses to a poll promoted on Facebook, Twitter and in our email newsletter. Because of rounding, percentages may not add up to 100.

God's Creation

Re “The Green New Deal Should Be Improved, Not Mocked” (Our Take, 3/4): It is clear to me that our entire civilization faces an imminent, existential threat and that its prevention is entirely feasible, yet kept out of reach by a powerful few. When I go to Mass, I do not hear from our priests in their homilies about this massive threat to mankind. I cannot understand why this is not the only thing they preach about, and yet they do not address it at all. It is hard to turn to the Lord in times like these when those in our faith community who are supposed to lead and guide us in this practice barely even acknowledge that it is happening.

I implore the editors of **America** to treat climate change with the urgency it demands. God's creation depends on it.

Luke Westby
Chicago, Ill.

Amends

Re “The Case for Public Penance,” by Eve Tushnet (3/4): One of the concerns that I have expressed on several occasions has been the lack of discussion and attention to the abuse crisis in every local parish. There is a daily cascade of stories about the abuse crisis in the media. In contrast, in most parishes, the silence around the issue is deafening; there is a seeming indifference to what people in the pews are hearing and seeing in the secular press. The practice of private confessions perhaps has created a culture that precludes opportunities for public group confession, penance and reconciliation.

Vincent Gaglione 🗨️

Sing a Song

Re “Mornings With Mahalia,” by W. Ralph Eubanks (3/4): Thank you, Mr. Eubanks, for an insightful article. I attend Mass at St. Anthony's Shrine in Boston, where the community is diverse and the music ministry extraordinary. It routinely incorporates different cultural forms of music to reflect the makeup of the congregation. This effort inspires, educates and informs. Your comments make me aware of the importance of gospel music.

Leonard Ryer 🗨️

For Love and to Love

Re “Why I Am Pro-Life,” by James Martin, S.J. (3/4): This is beautiful. I am starting to think that “pro-choice” is really “no choice” because women at this point feel unsupported and desperate. We are made for love and to love. Each and every life is precious.

Nancy Johnson Antonini 🗨️

Final Rose

Re “The First Virgin ‘Bachelor’ Challenges Prejudices,” by Amanda Haas (3/4): This is a good article about a sensitive topic. As the article points out, human sexuality is a complex issue, and the virgin bachelor is allowing for some important dialogue between him and the female contestants.

Jane Ellis 🗨️

An Alternative

Re “Contra Trump, Church Leaders Describe a Humanitarian Emergency at the Border,” by Kevin Clarke (3/4): Use that money for universal health care for veterans and the homeless and to open mental institutions once again. That's where the money needs to go. And for the poor. That's an emergency.

Cesar Jouvin 🗨️

Seconded

Re “Practical Resistance,” by Nathan Schneider (3/4): This is a real problem among many in my generation and younger. After the 2016 election, many were going to marches. But what concrete action did I get from my marching, pink-hat-wearing, poster-holding young friends? Nothing. I began a real, tangible project to house refugees in my home parish. The people who came and helped were all over the age of 59, some in their 70s and 80s.

Jennifer D. Behnke 🗨️

A Great Evil

Re “The Call to Simplicity,” by Serena Sigillito (2/18): This is a very good article. It must be made clear that the greatest evil we face as global citizens is materialism and greed, the idolatry of serving wealth and material accumulation beyond need. Most of us are complicit in this—and this is what is leading to the destruction of the environment that sustains all life.

Paul Schryba 🗨️

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

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

How the Apostolic Preferences for the Society of Jesus Guide America Media

Last month, Arturo Sosa, S.J., the superior general of the Society of Jesus, announced four universal apostolic preferences, or reference points, for the ministries of Jesuits around the world. “For the last 16 months, the Society of Jesus has been following a process of discernment so as to better meet the needs for our mission at our present time,” Father Sosa said in explaining why the Society has taken this step.

The four points, presented in a letter to all Jesuits and approved by Pope Francis, are meant to guide the Jesuits and their colleagues in the “common mission of the Catholic Church” for the next 10 years. The four points are: First, as men of “prayer, rooted in Christ,” Jesuits must help people move closer to God through discernment and the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola, especially in response to a more secularized society. Second, Jesuits must walk with the most marginalized

and excluded in the world, including the poor and other vulnerable people. Third, the Society of Jesus and its ministries must place a focus on accompanying young people; and fourth, it must prioritize “care for our common home” and the protection and renewal of the environment.

Pope Francis thanked Father Sosa and expressed support for the four preferences. He stated that they “are in harmony with the present priorities of the church [as] expressed through the ordinary magisterium of the pope, of the synods and of the episcopal conferences.”

In a world that is becoming increasingly secular and polarized, the four preferences remind us that no matter what happens in the world, we are called as Catholics to promote and live out God’s mission. At America Media, these preferences also speak directly to the mission we have embraced since 1909: to pursue the truth in love. Because of this mission and in

solidarity with the vision of our founders, we have always viewed **America** not primarily as a magazine or a company but as a ministry.

From our podcast for young Catholics to our continued coverage of difficult issues, like the sex abuse crisis and racism in the United States, to our reporting overseas, **America** strives to understand and highlight the experiences of those on the margins. Every day, we strive to be, as our editor in chief, Matt Malone, S.J., wrote in 2014, “contemplatives in action at the intersection of the church and the world.” Through this aspiration, we labor to live out continuously the mission of the church and of the Society of Jesus, which serves it.

As a media ministry, we commit ourselves to pursuing these preferences and to encouraging dialogue and discernment among Jesuits and our many colleagues about how these preferences can shape the future of our ministries.

Another Blow to the Constitutional Order

On Feb. 26, the U.S. House of Representatives voted to block President Trump’s declaration of a “national emergency” on the border with Mexico by a vote of 245 to 182. The votes fell mostly along party lines, with only 13 Republicans voting for the measure.

Mr. Trump’s declaration on Feb. 14 came after months of wrangling with congressional Democrats, who have not approved the whole \$5.7 billion he requested for a wall along the southern border. (He also failed to secure this funding in his first two years as president, when the Republicans controlled both branches of Congress.) Accord-

ing to S&P Global Ratings, the U.S. economy lost approximately \$6 billion during the 35-day partial government shutdown resulting from this standoff in December and January, the longest in U.S. history.

But according to the plain meaning of the words, there is no “national emergency” at the border. Late last year, the Pew Research Center released a report indicating that illegal immigration is at a 10-year low. And despite Mr. Trump’s frequent horror stories of crimes committed by undocumented immigrants, research shows that immigrants, whether documented or not, commit crimes at lower

rates than do U.S. citizens.

As Peter Wallison of the American Enterprise Institute recently noted, “Congress reserves for itself the ability to complain about the abuse of its constitutional authority while happily giving it away when that is politically or ideologically advantageous.” House Republican support for this emergency declaration, for example, stands in stark contrast to the skepticism Republicans expressed toward President Obama’s efforts to expand executive branch powers. During the Obama administration, congressional Republicans lamented what some called an imperial presidency, denouncing exec-

Founded in 1909

utive orders on matters like the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program.

Mr. Trump, too, was a staunch critic of the Obama administration's overuse of executive orders. The editors of **America** also criticized Mr. Obama, as well as former President George W. Bush, for overstepping the bounds of acceptable executive conduct. More recently, **America's** editors have criticized Congress for repeatedly approaching the brink of a government shutdown in order to get anything done.

The president's emergency declaration is only the latest attempt to bypass the ordinary means of governing. Congress should act decisively to defend its constitutional prerogatives and judgment. At press time, four Republican senators—Rand Paul of Kentucky, Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, Susan Collins of Maine and Thom Tillis of North Carolina—had announced that they will vote for a resolution blocking the emergency declaration, which should be enough for it to pass, though not enough to override Mr. Trump's likely veto. But many more should join them.

Above all, Mr. Trump's action is dangerous because it is based on fear. The president campaigned by appealing to nativist fears among his political base; this so-called emergency is an attempt to govern by the same means. Instead of defending it for a short-term political advantage, Republicans in Congress should reject this emergency declaration as a degradation of constitutional order and a petulant refusal to accept reasonable legislative compromise.

There is no new threat at the southern border. But in Washington, the country faces ongoing confusion and dissembling that, if not addressed, will inevitably lead to a genuine constitutional emergency for the nation.

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How boxing fit devotional culture among Catholic immigrants

From the late 19th through the mid-20th centuries, boxing was one of the most popular sports in the United States, generating journalistic attention and crowds that sometimes surpassed those for football and baseball. Pugilism, as it was once known, was especially popular among immigrant Catholics.

As late as the 1970s, boxing saturated U.S. Catholic culture. There were parish boxing clubs and matches sponsored by the Knights of Columbus, sermons about boxing by prominent bishops, and boxing columns in Catholic periodicals. Boxing lessons were common in parish schools, and priests served as trainers at all levels of the sport, a few working with titleholders like Sonny Liston and Joe Louis. Devout Catholic titleholders like Rocky Marciano, Gene Tunney and Floyd Patterson were a particular source of pride. Bishop Bernard Sheil founded the Catholic Youth Organization in 1930 to promote athletic and spiritual discipline among Chicago's delinquent youth, primarily by training them to box. And since 1931, students at the University of Notre Dame have raised money for missions in present-day Bangladesh through an annual series of boxing matches known as the Bengal Bouts.

The close association between boxing and American Catholicism also showed up in books and films. In the 1940s and 1950s, Catholic periodicals and even some devotional magazines profiled prominent boxers or fights. Additionally, images of Catholics in films from Hollywood's golden age were inextricably linked with the sport. From the gentle boxing lesson given by Sister Mary Benedict in "The Bells of St. Mary's" (1945) to the "I could have been a contender" speech

by Terry Malloy in "On the Waterfront" (1954), boxing was commonly used by filmmakers to underscore the Catholicism of a particular character.

But historians of boxing almost universally explain the sport in terms of ethnicity and economics rather than religion and theology, arguing that boxing was popular because it offered opportunities for wealth and celebrity to ethnic, working-class men who were otherwise excluded from spheres of economic and social privilege. This explanation is incomplete because it underestimates the religious resonances of the sport for Catholics immersed in a devotional culture that placed spiritual value on the experience of the body in pain.

The aesthetics and kinetics of boxing made it uniquely suited to Catholic devotional culture before the Second Vatican Council. The corporeal brutality, the physical perseverance required of participants, the physical wounding that inevitably resulted, the ubiquity of blood—all these characteristics of the sport appealed to values central to the Catholic "culture of suffering" of the early and mid-20th century.

A boxing match enacted the central spiritual mysteries of the faith—the *imitatio Christi* personified in a boxer's willingness to endure suffering for a greater cause, the Stations of the Cross in his perseverance through round after round of punishment, the stigmata in the gashes and abrasions that collected on his body as a fight wore on, and Christological death and resurrection each time a boxer was knocked down and managed to rise back to his feet.

For Catholic fighters and spectators alike, boxing echoed and affirmed a uniquely Catholic view that under-

stood physical suffering as a path to religious purity and bodily mortification as a tool for spiritual edification. While Protestant writings and sermons at the beginning of the 20th century touted boxing's capacity to instill virtues like masculine vigor and moral discipline, boxers and boxing fans within the "Catholic ghetto" inhabited a moral universe that emphasized the physical aspects of boxing, attributing a spiritual value to the physical punishment that the sport engendered.

Boxing reinforced uniquely Catholic ideas about the redemptive value of physical suffering at the same time it offered a powerful form of assimilation to male Catholic immigrants. In contrast to longstanding stigmas that associated Catholic manhood with feminization, passivity and deviance, the newly legitimated sport of boxing offered Catholic men, especially immigrants, opportunities to participate in a culturally sanctioned form of manhood and, through it, to claim white, middle-class respectability.

Boxing made "American men" of Catholics even while it affirmed their connection to the deepest devotional currents of their religion. The waning of boxing from both the public sphere and from Catholic culture obscures the importance of pugilism, and the spirituality of which it was an essential part, in the American Catholic past.

Amy Koehlinger is an associate professor in the School of History, Philosophy and Religion at Oregon State University. She is the author of *The New Nuns: Racial Justice and Religious Reform in the 1960s* and is currently writing a book titled *Rosaries and Rope Burns: Boxing and Manhood in American Catholicism, 1880-1960*.



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A national security threat to Brazil?

The upcoming synod on the Amazon raises concerns in the Bolsonaro government

By Filipe Domingues

This fall's meeting of the Synod of Bishops on the Pan-Amazonian Region is already heightening tensions between the Catholic Church in Brazil and the populist, right-wing government of President Jair Bolsonaro. The national newspaper *O Estado de S. Paulo* reported on Feb. 10 that the government believes the gathering of bishops will promote a "leftist agenda." According to the newspaper, military ministers "see the church as a potential opponent" and intend to "neutralize" critiques of the government during the synod.

The synod on the theme "Amazonia: New Paths for the Church and for an Integral Ecology" was first announced by Pope Francis in 2017 and will take place in October in Rome. The gathering will include representatives from nine countries in the Amazon region: Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, French Guyana, Guyana, Peru, Suriname and Venezuela.

According to *O Estado de S. Paulo*, the Bolsonaro government fears that "leftist" leaders of the Catholic Church will fill the void created by Brazil's weakened political left. Internal documents prepared at Brazil's national intelligence agency allegedly discuss recent meetings of bishops with Pope Francis at the Vatican in preparation for the synod.

General Augusto Heleno, the chief minister of the National Security Office and one of Mr. Bolsonaro's closest advisers, told the newspaper that there is, in fact, a strong concern. "There has long been influence of the church and of N.G.O.s" in the Amazon, General Heleno said, according to the report. In his view, the government's job is to "strengthen Brazilian sovereignty" and prevent foreign interests from intruding in the region.

One church source in Brazil told **America** that some members of the armed forces resent the influence and popularity of the Catholic Church in the Amazon.

Asked by journalists about the accuracy of the reports, the security office stated in a press release that "the Catholic Church is not the object of any kind of action" by national intelligence. It confirms, however, that the minister himself is concerned "with some points on the agenda of the Synod on the Amazon" because of issues of "national sovereignty." The statement continued, "We reiterate the understanding of the National Security Office that it is up to Brazil to take care of the Brazilian Amazon."

In Brazil, references to "progressive clergy," "red bishops" or "leftist" religious men and women are often used to



CNS/Barbara J. Fraser

Miguel Angel Cadenas, a Spanish Augustinian missionary, baptizes an infant in an Urarina indigenous community on Peru's Urituyacu River in 2014.

discredit Catholics involved in social justice movements. Priests, religious and laypeople across the country work with small farmers, landless workers, migrants, the indigenous and the poor through groups like Comissão Pastoral da Terra and the Indigenist Missionary Council. While some activists are directly involved in politics, others adopt a nonpartisan approach.

Priests and religious people were among the founding members of Brazil's Workers' Party in the 1980s, years in which the country was governed by a repressive military dictatorship. Weakened over the years by systemic corruption, the party lost the support of many Catholics who work for social justice. Mr. Bolsonaro defeated the Workers' Party in last year's presidential elections.

According to Francisco Borba Ribeiro Neto, the coordinator of the Center for Faith and Culture at the Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo and a religion commentator in Brazilian media, Mr. Bolsonaro's administration sees "the left" as their major enemy. "In fact, there are many Catholics with leftist positions—as there are those on the right," Mr. Ribeiro Neto said. But he pushed back on the idea that the synod on the Amazon had a political agenda. Its aims, he said, "are anchored in the social teaching of the church."

"A synod on the Amazon must focus on local challenges for evangelization. It is not an ideological invention of the moment but the recognition of a need for an evangelizing action that is well reflected and conscious," he said.

Preserving the "peoples of the forest" is neither an exclusive mission of the Catholic Church nor a "leftist agenda" issue, he added. Mr. Ribeiro Neto noted that a large part of the population in the region "is excluded from the processes of human and socioeconomic development due to poverty and the geographic isolation imposed by the forest."

"There is a techno-scientific consensus, rather than [an] ideological [one], that the occupation of tropical forests should not be done in the same patterns as the occupation of temperate zones," he said. "The recognition of human rights and dignity of all populations, regardless of their economic and social status or ethnicity, is also accepted worldwide as a condition for democratic coexistence and peace. The prob-

lem is that the Bolsonaro government has put itself, ideologically, in opposition to these consensuses."

The president of the Pan-Amazon Ecclesial Network and a close adviser to Pope Francis, Cardinal Cláudio Hummes, also stated in a video that it is not the church's intention "to promote a new nation" in the Amazon. He told **America** that in order to protect the "small ones," or the poor and those living on the margins, the church must engage in dialogue with all of the actors who hold interests in the Amazon: international companies, scientists, the military and national and local governments—even if, at times, they are hostile to the church's message.

"The church must always try the way of dialogue. Some [disagreements] will be irreducible, but we shall pursue a culture of encounter. The church does not wish to build a new Amazon. If someone sees it differently, we shall talk to them," the cardinal said.

Cardinal Hummes, archbishop emeritus of São Paulo and former prefect of the Congregation for Clergy, has been a close friend to the pope since Jorge Mario Bergoglio was archbishop of Buenos Aires. "We must find new models of development that respect the Amazon," he said. "It is currently a target for colonialism: People and organizations come and want to install their models without asking permission to local populations or respecting their origins and traditions."

"Even the church has done that," he admitted.

For the cardinal, the main goal of this synod is clear: finding new paths for the church in the Amazon. That includes situating the church in a global context of environmental issues and "saving the possibility of saving the planet."

"Caring for the earth is a mission that God delivered to us. It is a mission of the church, and she cannot stay away from it—not only in the Amazon but let us think also of other places, for instance the Congo Basin," Cardinal Hummes said. The synod is also about overcoming a "technocratic paradigm," he said, and promoting an "integral ecology."

"We are a fruit of this planet, created by God. And God incarnated in Jesus Christ and made this interconnection permanent," Cardinal Hummes said. "Everything is interconnected in our common home."

Filipe Domingues, *São Paulo* correspondent.
Twitter: @filipedomingues.

The big money behind March Madness

Watching “March Madness,” the N.C.A.A. annual college basketball tournament, has become a tradition for many Catholics, thanks in part to the regular inclusion of Catholic universities in the Final Four—as well as such celebrities as Sister Jean Dolores Schmidt, B.V.M., the chaplain of Loyola University Chicago’s basketball team. This year’s tournament, with 67 teams playing from March 17 through April 8, is notable for Jesuit schools because of the possibility that Gonzaga, the Jesuit university in Spokane, Wash., will become the first champion from the Western half of the United States since 1997.

The term “March Madness” refers not only to the number of upsets and buzzer beaters but also to the big money behind college sports. Last year ticket sales brought in almost \$130 million, and tickets for just the first and second rounds of the tournament went for hundreds of dollars, the N.C.A.A. estimated that 97 million people worldwide watched March Madness games on television, and one market research group said the games generated \$1.3 billion in advertising revenue. CBS is paying the N.C.A.A. up to \$1.1 billion a year to telecast the games under a contract that runs through 2032.

A lot of that CBS money flows back to schools—the N.C.A.A. paid \$560 million to schools in the Division I league in fiscal year 2017 under a complex system that gives more to schools (typically including Gonzaga) that last the longest in the tournament. None of this windfall goes to the athletes, of course, who must compete as “amateurs,” nor do student athletes receive any of the revenue from other college sports, even at the couple of dozen universities that take in more than \$100 million annually. Almost all of these are public schools, but the University of Notre Dame is reportedly among them.

The potential of sports programs to raise revenue (and, presumably, alumni donations) means that coaches are among the highest paid staff at just about every college with competitive teams. Athletics also account for a large share of capital spending.

For example, the University of Notre Dame’s “largest building project in its 172-year history,” completed in 2017, earmarked \$400 million for a project that included 750,000 square feet in three new buildings for student services and academic departments. Strikingly, the new buildings were built on the sides of the school’s football stadium (with a capacity of almost 80,000), and the project included stadium upgrades such as vinyl-covered benches, a 96-by-54 foot video screen, new lights and a new press box, according to the South Bend Tribune. Fundraising campaigns for major building projects may be easier when there is a little something for football fans.

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



Villanova Wildcats head coach Jay Wright. The Wildcats won the 2018 N.C.A.A. men’s basketball championship.

CNS photo/Robert Deutsch, USA TODAY Sports via Reuters

COACHES AT THE TOP

Highest-paid employees at selected Catholic universities (total compensation from most current tax filing available):

- ▶ **VILLANOVA UNIVERSITY (2017):**
Jerold T. (Jay) Wright, men’s basketball coach: **\$3,878,768**
- ▶ **GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY (2016):**
John R. Thompson III, men’s basketball coach: **\$3,812,679**
- ▶ **UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME (2016):**
John B. Swarbrick Jr., athletic director: **\$3,110,291**
- ▶ **BOSTON COLLEGE (2017):**
Stephen R. Addazio, football coach: **\$2,514,859**
- ▶ **UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON (2017):**
Ryan J. Miller, men’s basketball coach: **\$2,050,519**
- ▶ **ST. JOHN’S UNIVERSITY (2017):**
Christopher P. Mullin, men’s head basketball coach: **\$2,046,019**
- ▶ **MARQUETTE UNIVERSITY (2016):**
Steven Wojciechowski, men’s basketball coach: **\$1,866,965**
- ▶ **GONZAGA UNIVERSITY (2017):**
Mark Few, men’s basketball coach: **\$1,779,635**
- ▶ **XAVIER UNIVERSITY (2016):**
Christopher Mack, men’s basketball coach: **\$1,668,930**
- ▶ **CREIGHTON UNIVERSITY (2017):**
Gregory McDermott, men’s basketball coach: **\$1,527,721**

THE FIGHTING IRISH



The University of Notre Dame has won 13 national college national football championships, ranging from 1919 through 1988, according to the N.C.A.A., behind Yale (18), Alabama (15) and Princeton (15). No other Catholic university has won a championship so far. Notre Dame has sent 47 players to the College Football Hall of Fame, in Atlanta, more than any other school.

Sources: Latest available Form 990 tax returns (listing employees with highest compensation packages), posted at Guidestar.org; College Football Championship History, ncaa.com; College Football Hall of Fame.

In the Philippines a Duterte critic is charged with 'cyber libel'

Maria Ressa, center, takes questions after posting bail on Feb. 14 in Manila.

Critics charge that the arrest of the Philippine journalist Maria Ressa on Feb. 13 appears to be part of both a sustained campaign against her media organization specifically and an overall climate of press suppression under the Duterte administration. Ms. Ressa is the founding editor of the online news site Rappler.

Her news agency has covered extrajudicial killings conducted with impunity during President Rodrigo Roa Duterte's so-called drug war, as well as official misconduct and privately financed social media campaigns that benefit the president. The charge against her was based on legislation passed in 2012 against "cybercrime" that lumps "cyber libel" as a criminal offense alongside child pornography, identity theft and fraud.

"Rappler has been one of the most vigilant media outfits in the country," Anna Marie Karaos, associate director of the John J. Carroll Institute on Church and Social Issues in Manila, said. "The arrest represents an affront on press freedom and is obviously designed to curtail Rappler's ability to counter the falsehoods that are clearly coming out of this administration."

Over the last 12 months, one of Rappler's reporters was banned from Malacañang Palace (the seat of executive power in Manila); the Philippines' Securities and Exchange Commission sought to revoke the website's license to operate; and the Duterte administration's Department of Justice has filed five tax-related cases against it.

These latest charges against Ms. Ressa test a law that does not account for critical reporting in a democratic setting. "Many of the more informed Filipinos read the arrest of Maria Ressa as plain intimidation of critical media."

One critical institution that has proved difficult to intimidate so far has been the Catholic Church. The bishops do not necessarily hold the same position in the political culture that they did during the Marcos regime, when Car-

dinal Jaime Sin was able to bring thousands of Filipinos to the streets in what became the People Power revolution in 1986. But the church remains enough of a threat that it has been a consistent rhetorical target of Mr. Duterte's.

"The bishops are trying to be bolder in their public statements," said Ms. Karaos. "On a number of important public issues, such as the many cases of killings of alleged drug users at the hands of police personnel, the proposed reimposition of the death penalty, and the lowering of the minimum age of criminal responsibility from 15 to either 12 or 9 years old, the church's position has clearly been at odds with that of the government. I think the Catholic Church will continue to speak out, perhaps not as loudly or as solidly as many progressive Catholics would like, but it is speaking out."

Though Filipino bishops have so far not spoken directly about Ms. Ressa's arrest, administrators at De La Salle and Ateneo de Manila universities, which were founded by Lasallians and Jesuits respectively, did so. Their resistance to Mr. Duterte is not insignificant given the universities' histories of mobilizing students for protest and the generations-deep networks of alumni across the country and around the world.

De La Salle's president, Armin Luistro, F.S.C., was unequivocal in his response: "Let's give our all-out support as Lasallians to Rappler. Let's defend press freedom."

In a lengthier memo, which called Ms. Ressa "brave," Jose Ramon Villarin, S.J., president of Ateneo, said: "In an atmosphere of fear and silence, we are obliged to speak when we see things which are not right, even if doing so can bring individuals and institutions to peril. Speaking truth can be daunting, but the greater imperative is to stand our ground against those who sow fear when the truth is spoken."

Fatima Measham contributes from Melbourne, Australia.
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After violent street protests, Haiti steps back from the brink



“The hour is serious, poverty is increasing; the common good is threatened,” the bishops of Haiti wrote in a pastoral letter released on Feb. 11. They called for calm and dialogue amid a growing popular revolt that rocked the Caribbean nation in February.

Immiserated by a 50 percent devaluation of the local currency over the past six months and incensed by the alleged corruption of President Jovenel Moïse, Haitians have been demanding, “Kot Kòb Petrocaribe a?” (“Where is the Petrocaribe money?”). The protest chant is a reference to more than \$4 billion in Venezuelan development funds that have vanished under the Moïse administration. Demonstrations brought all private and government business to a halt in the capital of Port-au-Prince and in the provinces.

“Anything could happen to anyone at any moment,” Jean Denis Saint-Félix, S.J., superior of the Jesuits in Haiti, told *America*. The watchword for Jesuits during the crisis has been prudence, he said, “but it is a prudence that is similar to fear...which we must break if we are to accompany the people in their fight for justice and better living conditions.”

In a communique to fellow Jesuits, Father Saint-Félix wrote: “I have great difficulty seeing how this government can continue, because it is being criticized on all sides for its incompetence and its inability to react well and on time.

We are calling for the pure and simple departure of the President of the Republic...as well as that of Prime Minister Jean-Henry Céant.”

Huswald Timothee, the honorary consul of Romania in Haiti, spent the duration of the unrest locked in his house, afraid to leave because of the breakdown in public order. He places the blame for the disturbances squarely on the president’s shoulders. “The only solution would be for him to resign.”

Popular anger over the Petrocaribe scandal first boiled over in October, as Haitians commemorated the assassination of Jean-Jacques Dessalines, one of the country’s founding fathers. “Every year there is a commemoration about Dessalines and the president goes to the tomb and places a wreath,” said Raymond Alcide Joseph, the former Haitian ambassador to the United States, “and this year the president was met with stones.”

Popular dissatisfaction with government corruption was further stoked by the swift decline of Haiti’s currency, the gourde. Inflationary pressure on prices for basic foodstuffs, fuel and even water set the stage for the countrywide demonstrations that erupted on Feb. 7, the anniversary of the fall of Haiti’s odious Duvalier dictatorship.

“It’s no longer a political crisis,” said Ambassador Jo-



Photo/Dieu Nalio Chery

Protesters demand the resignation of Haitian President Jovenel Moïse in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, on Feb. 12.

seph. “It’s a crisis of the stomach.”

On Feb. 17 Haitians enjoyed a reprieve from the disorder, as citizens around the country were able to head to markets to find provisions and water, and fuel trucks were allowed past barricades to outlying districts of the capital. The night before, Prime Minister Céant announced a series of budget reduction measures, cutting perks and benefits for government officials, designed to placate the demonstrators.

On Monday, Feb. 18, the streets were quieter, though it was unclear if protesters had been mollified by the prime minister’s gestures or if the uprising had temporarily run out of steam. But the drivers of protest remained in place as February ended. Mr. Moïse had not resigned, and the Haitian currency was still sliding. Haiti is ranked fourth in the world in income inequality.

“The population is demanding profound change, given the corruption that is present at all levels of government,” said Mario Serrano Marte, S.J., a priest who works on the border between Haiti and the Dominican Republic, “but the resignation of the president is fundamental.”

Mario Ariza contributes from Miami.
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Photo by Michael Sainsbury

Reaching out to people on the margins in Cocoa, East Timor.

GOODNEWS

Jesuit effort brings food and health care to the margins in East Timor

At the top of a hillside in East Timor, Christina Da Cruz and her colleague Leonora Mendonsa slowly maneuver an aging four-wheel-drive stacked with plates, spoons and a massive pot of soupy stew to a halt by a small, whitewashed church atop the village of Cocoa. Their aim is to provide as much nutrition to as many children as they can during their visit.

Longinhos da Costa Monteiro, a malnourished 10-year-old, approaches the truck. “This feeding program is important for me to build my body and then to help my brain to be strong,” she said. “When I am strong, it means my future is bright.”

Her explanation neatly illustrates the Jesuit program’s emphasis on nutrition, health and education, a trio of social needs that are essential for the nation’s future development. The nutrition program has its roots in an earlier version run by the Good Samaritan sisters in the 2000s. Its current incarnation includes a church-run medical clinic in the larger community of Railaco and a traveling medical clinic that provides basic health care to mountain villages. A secondary school is also offered in Railaco, with ever-improving facilities, services and results.

Bong Abad Santos, S.J., a Filipino missionary and a medical doctor, was posted to East Timor in 2004. He runs the clinic in Railaco, but he still travels three times a week to remote villages on treacherous, cliff-hugging roads.

“I think the government should do more to help us in this isolated area,” one villager complains. “My grandson is sick and I asked my daughter to take him to the state health center, but the people said there is no medicine. I have no money to buy the medicine, so Father Bong is our last hope.”

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Members of Athletica Vaticana in
St. Peter's Square



RUNNING FOR THE POPE

By Michael J. O'Loughlin

A new Vatican team supports fitness and the value of being Christian. And they just might make it to the Olympics someday.



Rome is a city whose very essence compels people to look up. For this I am thankful, especially when, one evening during a reporting trip here in February, I descend down the few dozen steps leading from a bridge just across from the second-century Castel Sant'Angelo toward the banks of the Tiber River. Down here, Rome is, well, unbeautiful. A two-lane trail provides traffic-free pavement for runners and cyclists, but graffiti adorn the massive stone walls. Garbage accumulates on the riverbank. Stray shoes—only one at a time, never a pair—dot the trail. During one run last year, I dodged police vehicles zooming toward what turned out to be a crime scene; I read the next day a body had been found. Luckily, runners can always look up for inspiration.

So I do.

I see the picturesque churches, some dating back many centuries, that soar into the air. In the evening, brilliant red and orange sunsets provide a dramatic backdrop to the umbrella-like stone pine trees that dot the landscape. And in the winter, migratory birds passing through the city form dazzling patterns, zigging and zagging in geometric shapes, inviting those standing on the ground below to gaze into the heavens.

Running through Rome has been a constant for me ever since my first visit there a few years ago. Hitting the trails provides a release valve amid often grueling days of interviews, press briefings and navigating the labyrinthine bureaucracy of the Catholic Church. So it was with special interest that I read in January that



I AM A #GAMECHANG

Join me and be part of the club that believes sport can change the world.

the Vatican had established its own track and field team, *Athletica Vaticana*, which has already competed in a handful of races throughout Italy and dreams, someday, of representing the tiny state of Vatican City in the Olympics.

The team is made up of 60 athletes who range from 19 to 62 years of age. Most are amateurs, though a few log impressive times in local races, with some even capturing medals. Michela Ciprietti, a team member who works at the Vatican's pharmacy, won the Vienna half-marathon in 2018, finishing the 13.1 miles in just under one hour and 23 minutes.

The team has a coach and official uniforms: blue warm-up suits and yellow running shirts with white piping, the colors of the flag of Vatican City. The crossed keys and papal tiara that make up the papal insignia are stamped on the upper left of the shirt, and on the right, the logo of Errea, an Italian manufacturer chosen by the Vatican to supply the team's gear because of its commitment to environmental sustainability and fair labor practices. (The team hopes to sell the gear to the public in the future.)

The man charged with starting the team is Msgr. Melchor Sánchez de Toca y Alameda, an affable Spaniard in his 50s who has worked at the Pontifical Council for Culture for more than 20 years.

A few years ago, Monsignor Sánchez was asked by Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi, who has led the culture office

since 2007, to add sports to his portfolio. When I asked Monsignor Sánchez, now the undersecretary of the office, during a recent interview if he was a lifelong sports fan, given his current role in promoting athletics and sportsmanship for the Vatican, he laughed.

"I've never been a big fan of any sport. Not even soccer," said Monsignor Sánchez, who in 2018 headed the first Vatican delegation to take part in an official session of the International Olympic Committee.

He must have picked up on my look of confusion and my audible "huh," as Monsignor Sánchez quickly explained that while watching sports on television has never appealed to him, athletic competition and the emotional response to it by people across the world always has. Growing up in Spain, Monsignor Sánchez was an athlete, and a few years ago he began running again, even setting his sights on training for the Rome International Marathon.

Rome's annual marathon follows a course that is steeped in history. Beginning in front of the Colosseum, it takes athletes past the Eternal City's most iconic sites, including St. Peter's Basilica, Piazza Navona and the Spanish Steps.

Monsignor Sánchez squeezed training into his schedule wherever he could. During the week, after finishing up at the office, located in a building alongside the cobblestoned Via della Conciliazione, the road that leads pilgrims and tour buses to St. Peter's Square, he would run home. Nav-

Msgr. Melchor Sánchez de Toca y Alameda has worked at the Pontifical Council for Culture for more than 20 years. He is training for the Rome International Marathon.

ignating Rome's chaotic streets, he dodged traffic and tried to avoid potholes, often taking a circuitous route with some stretches along the Tiber, in order to add extra miles as race day approached. On Sunday afternoons, following morning Mass and occasionally a meeting, he would embark on the double-digit-mile runs that are part of most marathon training programs.

Come race day, he finished in about four and a half hours. He was hooked on marathons and decided he would run another and another and another: He is currently training to run the 2019 Rome marathon in April—this time as a member of the Vatican's official athletic team.

Amateur sports leagues in Italy, like most things here, are highly regulated. That meant that even though a group of Vatican employees—priests, sisters, pharmacy workers, firefighters and even members of the Swiss Guard—began running together a few years ago, they could not compete in official competitions because they were not a recog-

nized team. But through a recent agreement with the Italian Olympic Committee, the team is now eligible to compete as an official member of the Italian track association.

The Best Times

One of the runners from the early days of the unofficial group that would become Vaticana Athletica is Thierry Roch, a 23-year-old member of the Swiss Guard whom I met at the Porta Sant'Anna on the west side of Vatican City in February. We found our way to a small café; and we, he with a lemon soda and I with a double espresso, spent an hour talking about the connection between his passion for running and his duty to protect the pope.

"I run every day," he told me. Slim and speaking slowly—he is fluent in French, German, Italian and Spanish and plans to spend time in the United States this summer to perfect his English skills—Mr. Roch said running was especially appealing to him during his early years as a member of the Swiss Guard. Back then, he would have to spend hours standing perfectly still, adorned in the iconic yellow, blue and red uniforms inspired by the Medici family, not moving a single muscle. At the end of those long days, run-

ning was a natural release.

"We are always stressed," he said of young people generally. Running helps address some of that. In addition to the physical aspect, he uses the time for meditation and prayer. His training takes him along the Tiber and through Pamphili Gardens, one of the largest parks in Rome that includes lush gardens and a villa dating back to the 1600s. Plus, sharing a room with three other Swiss Guards means he does not have much of his own space, so an hour or two out on the trails gives him some time to himself.

Mr. Roch's hard work has paid off. Last year, he completed the Rome International Marathon, his first, in just 2 hours and 47 minutes. He won bronze in his division and placed 26th overall. (He was also the fastest member of the Vatican's team in the debut race on Jan. 20, finishing the 10K in 35 minutes and 31 seconds, coming in 87th place out of more than 6,000 runners.)

While the Vatican team could someday be eligible for Olympic participation, more immediate goals include a possible official appearance in the Games of the Small States of Europe.

Launched in 1985, the G.S.S.E. hosts an annual competition, usually in late May, for nations in Europe that are part of the European Olympic Committees and that have a population of under a million. Those nations are Andorra, Cyprus, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro and San Marino. With only about 1,000 residents and its own sovereign territory located within Italy, Vatican City seems to qualify. Team leaders are in negotiations to take part in the 2019 games, which will be held in Montenegro between May 27 and June 1.

Mr. Roch hopes to be among the handful of people from the Vatican's team who will take part in the games, running in the 10K competition, before his time in the Swiss Guard concludes later this year.

While his times are impressive, Mr. Roch said what he appreciates most about the team is the camaraderie and the charity work the team undertakes together. This has included accompanying people who are poor or who lack housing to athletic events. Two honorary members of the team are Muslim migrants who moved to Rome from Africa without a support network in place. And later this spring, Mr. Roch and several other members of the team will travel to Wittenberg, Germany, to run alongside a team of Protestant Christians whom they first met in Rome last year during the 500th anniversary

Photo courtesy of Msgr. Melchor Sánchez



Catholic groups around the world have taken to heart the Vatican's call to engage with sports more seriously. 🏃🏃

Thierry Roch, 23, said running was especially appealing to him during his early years as a member of the Swiss Guard.

of the Reformation.

“We are not searching the best times,” he said, “but trying to show the values of being a good Christian. That’s the goal of the team.”

The team is also intentional about including athletes with disabilities, so that they can raise awareness about access to competition. On March 31, some members will compete in the Run for Autism. And the team’s first official run was on Jan. 20, when they competed in La Corsa di Miguel, a 10K race named in honor of a runner and poet who was “disappeared” during Argentina’s civil war.

Of Perseverance and St. Peter

The Vatican has encouraged the mingling of faith and sports for many years, and not just in Rome.

Pope John Paul II created the Pontifical Council for Culture in 1982, and today it considers all kinds of cultural activities “so that human civilization may become increasingly open to the Gospel, and so that men and women of science,

letters and the arts may know that the Church acknowledges their work as a service to truth, goodness and beauty,” according to the Vatican website’s description of the council.

In 2016, the Council for Culture hosted Sport at the Service of Humanity, a global conference on faith and sports, which included an address from Pope Francis. It was attended by the leaders of the United Nations, the International Olympic Committee and the North American National Collegiate Athletic Association. In his address to the gathering, Pope Francis, a soccer fan who has tweeted many times about the value of sports in bringing people together, extolled the efforts of various bodies promoting athletics to ensure that “sport is a source of inclusion, of inspiration and of involvement.”

“Everybody is aware of the enthusiasm with which children will play with a rugged old deflated ball in the suburbs of some great cities or the streets of small towns,” he said. “I wish to encourage all of you...to work together to ensure these children can take up sport in circumstances of

dignity, especially those who are excluded due to poverty.”

And Catholic groups around the world have taken to heart the Vatican’s call to engage with sports more seriously.

Back in 2011, a group of 52 Catholic nuns joined forces to tackle the Beijing marathon, splitting up the race into segments, to help raise money to support people living with H.I.V. and AIDS. For more than a decade, a group of soccer teams composed of seminarians studying in Rome has competed for the Clericus Cup, with students from the United States winning the title last year. And this spring, two Franciscan sisters from Toronto, Ohio, will try to finish the Cleveland Marathon, part of an effort to raise awareness of religious life and perhaps raise some money for charity along the way.

Sister Anna Rose said she began running a few years after she joined the Franciscan Sisters of Penance of the Sorrowful Mother in 2011. The group of 40 women, who live about 10 miles from the Franciscan University of Steubenville, incorporate exercise into their weekly routines, Sister Rose said, and are committed to carrying out some kind of physical activity three times a week.

When she first decided to run, Sister Rose tried for two minutes. Not hating it, next time she went for five. Then, slowly, she built up her endurance, and the miles began adding up. Inspired by another sister in the community, she decided she would try to complete the 26.2-mile race in May.

Sister Rose, who is 33, said that for her, running is not an end in itself but a tool to help her develop her faith more deeply. She said running helps her to “practice the virtues of living a Christian life.”

She mentioned feeling “gratitude that the Lord has given me a body that can run” and said that longer runs show her the power of “perseverance,” especially when “part of me doesn’t really want to run outside, like now, when it’s cold.”

During runs, she takes time to pray or spends it in fellowship with other members of her community. On days when she does not feel like going outside, she uses one of the treadmills her community was given, set up in front of a depiction of Jesus washing Peter’s feet.

“It’s really beautiful to run and meditate on that image. That’s the heart of the Gospel, Christ’s self-emptying,” she said.

When we spoke on the phone in mid-February, Sister Rose was preparing to leave for a seven-mile run. She had planned to go farther—many people training for marathons complete long runs of 16, 18 and even 22 miles on the weekends leading up the big race—but a stubborn injury was interfering with her plans. That annoyance, too, was another

reminder to Sister Rose of the Christian life, helping her realize that much of her life is out of her control.

“I don’t know if my body can sustain 26.2 miles; I’ve never done it before,” she said. But with the support of her sisters, some of whom plan to travel to Cleveland to run with her or to cheer her on, she thinks the experience will be worthwhile. “It’s a communal effort. It’s become for me a microcosm of the body of Christ, praying and interceding in different ways.”

But, she said, all through the sweat and grit of training, “we’re all fixed on him.”

Connecting Across Boundaries


Back in Rome, Monsignor Sánchez leans forward in his chair, growing excited as he talks about the power of sports in the lives of hundreds of millions of people. He laments that theologians have not spent much time considering this phenomenon—though he highlights two books that he has found helpful—*Catholic Perspectives on Sports*, by the U.S. Jesuit Patrick Kelly, and *A Brief Theology of Sport*, by the Anglican theologian Lincoln Harvey—and says one of his goals is to invite more serious thought about how sports fit into the Christian experience.

In the meantime, he is focused on working with influencers who can help make sports more inclusive. This means making sure that people with disabilities have access to teams, that people lacking financial resources are not shut out and that everyone is able to partake in the drama and leisure of sport. Building on the success of previous conferences at Villanova University and Loyola Marymount University, Monsignor Sánchez is hoping to host another meeting about the meaning and value of collegiate sports this fall at Georgetown University. And while his hopes for an Olympic appearance remain, Monsignor Sánchez said he is focused at the moment on highlighting the power of sports to speak to the deepest longings of human beings and to connect across boundaries.

“Sport is something that deeply moves and arouses the passions and emotions of millions of people,” he said. “It produces an energy that can be used for good or bad, with riots when teams win or lose.”

“You cannot ignore this,” he continued. “Is sport important for a Christian life? Yes, definitely.”

Michael J. O’Loughlin is the national correspondent for *America*.



MEET THE MOST CATHOLIC TEAM IN HOCKEY

This Nashville franchise has committed to the kind of community engagement that could make even Pope Francis a hockey fan.

By Michael McKinley

The National Hockey League, some might argue, is the most symbolically Catholic of all major league sports—an observation that might not be immediately apparent to those who mainly see it as a venue for pugilistic Canadians to knock out one another’s teeth.

There is plenty of evidence for the sport’s Catholic ties. Its trophy, the Stanley Cup—which fans and players alike will swear on a Bible is the hardest to win in professional sports—takes 16 victories over two tough postseason months and is called, with no sense of blasphemy, the Holy Grail. The penalty box is known as the Sin Bin, though confession there is usually a more profane rejection of the transgression, and absolution comes only if the sinner escapes the bin without a goal being scored on their team. Either way, much prayer happens there.

In Canada, where hockey is the national win-

ter sport, the Montreal Canadiens, one of the country’s seven teams, are nicknamed “La Sainte Flanelle,” or the Holy Cloth. In 2012, the Archdiocese of Montreal placed an ad in two French-language newspapers asking people to pray for the Canadiens to make the Stanley Cup playoffs. (The team did not.)

Despite its explicit Catholic attributes, N.H.L. players are not known for wearing religion on their sleeves the way players do in other sports leagues, like the National Football League or the National Basketball Association. “Most N.H.L. players don’t begin an interview with ‘I’d like to thank God,’” said Chris Junghans. Mr. Junghans is the executive vice president and chief revenue officer of the N.H.L.’s Nashville Predators. “I’m not saying that thanking God is a big-headed thing to do, but hockey players are just not as public with things like faith.”





The Nashville Predators battle the Edmonton Oilers. The team, inspired by their Catholic leadership, supports several humanitarian causes.

(Photo Credit: Steve Roberts/ Cal Sport Media via AP Images)



Photo courtesy of the Nashville Predators

Sean Henry, the Nashville Predators' president and C.E.O., draws on his Catholic faith to inspire the team and community in ways that have made the Predators one of the N.H.L.'s most successful franchises on and off the ice.

bus in my church, and so a lot of my stuff is helping with the parish fish fry. I help coordinate our diocesan seminary dinner, and I am more involved in Catholic charities. But people do everything from stuffing diaper bags to going out cleaning up neighborhoods, and everybody buys into it."

What the Nashville Predators employees—from superstars to the locker room attendants—are buying into is the idea behind what Sean Henry refers to as his favorite quotation: "It's always the right time to do the right thing."

"It hangs on my office wall, and it's from Martin Luther King," said the affable Mr. Henry, who grew up in West Islip on Long Island, N.Y., where he was an altar server at Our Lady of Lourdes, the parish his father, a carpenter, helped build. His sister, Lynn, is a member of the Sisters of St. Joseph in North Merrick, N.Y.

"I grew up in a family of six," said Mr. Henry, now 52 and a father of four. He had a small-town Catholic boyhood. "I went to public school, but on Wednesdays you got out of school early because you had to go to catechism. In fourth grade you got to be an altar boy, and I did it, but my motives were selfish, as I knew you got tips when you did weddings. In the summer you'd wake up early and go swimming and you'd play street hockey and basketball, and on Sundays, you'd go to Mass. It wasn't like being formed—it was just the way life was."

He got his start in sports working as a busboy for a concessions company that served Yankee Stadium and eventually wound up directing marketing and sales for the Tampa Bay Lightning in 1999, then one of the N.H.L.'s most desperate franchises. When the team won the Stanley Cup in 2004, the Lightning posted an annual profit of \$3.8 million—the first profit in their history. Under Mr. Henry's marketing savvy, the team's arena—then the St. Pete Times Forum and today the Amalie Arena—became ranked as one of the best sporting venues in the United States by Venues Today magazine. At the Forum, Mr. Henry built the first-ever all-inclusive club for fans to get food and drinks included in their ticket, with personalized service to their seats.

In 2010 he moved to Nashville, which had been plagued by rumors that the team was going to move to Kansas City, Mo., or to Hamilton, Ontario, where hockey-mad Canadians were already plunking down cash for season tickets. Nashville businesses were skittish about committing to the Predators, as were the fans. Mr. Henry knew that the team

Unless they are playing in Nashville, where the Catholic culture of the management has infused the team with a commitment to community engagement that could make even Pope Francis a hockey fan. It also helps that Nashville, while still the headquarters of the more than 15-million-member Southern Baptist Convention, has been transformed into a diverse city, where the Catholic Church is growing thanks to immigration, the low cost of living and a robust economy. From 2007 to 2014, the country's share of Catholics living in the South grew from 24 to 27 percent; and Nashville, where the Catholic population was once overwhelmingly Irish, has also seen a surge of Latino immigrants. In 2014, Latinos in the city numbered more than 66,000, which is nearly 17 times their number in 1980.

Mr. Junghans, who played baseball at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, is a Catholic. The Nashville Predators' co-owner and governor, Tom Cigarran, is a Catholic. The team's head of television broadcasting, Bob Kohl, is a Catholic and a graduate of Marquette University. Mr. Kohl credits Sean Henry, the president and chief executive officer of the Predators, with the Catholic vision that makes the team unique. "Sean lets you follow whatever your passion is," Mr. Kohl said. "Our community relations will put out ideas for people to engage within the community, and I'm very active with the Knights of Colum-



The National Hockey League, some might argue, is the most symbolically Catholic of all major league sports.

needed to connect with the city if they wanted to bring the Predators back from exile, and the influence of his Catholic culture kicked in.

“The best way to engage with your community is by helping other people,” said Mr. Henry. “We asked all of our employees to devote 40 hours to community service each year. And we wanted to know what it was that they were doing—not because we’re Big Brother but because we wanted to know what was important to them.”

At first, employees were skeptical about the mission. But when a Predator staffer who spent weekends repairing bicycles so that Nashville’s kids would have access to inexpensive transportation told Mr. Henry what he was doing, things took off. Mr. Henry gave the employee a grant; the Predators announced the need for used bikes. “He went from a dozen bikes a month to hundreds,” said Mr. Henry. “When you share your story of what you’re passionate about, the team can get behind it and make it bigger and better. It was like magic. The culture changed immediately, and our business success followed from that.”

An emphasis on community service is now an ingrained part of the team’s culture. The team’s former chairman, Tom Cigarran, a former health care executive, builds schools in Haiti. Mr. Junghans volunteers his time with youth baseball teams. Mr. Henry’s passion is AMEND Together, a partnership the Predators formed with Nashville’s Young Women’s Christian Association in 2014 to combat domestic violence.

Initially, Mr. Henry had low expectations, thinking the Y.W.C.A. wanted a jersey to auction rather than a sustained partnership. He listened to the statistics on domestic violence presented by the Y.W.C.A.: Tennessee ranks fourth in the country for the rate at which men kill women in domestic-related homicides. In Nashville, there is a domestic violence call to police every 20 minutes. Thanks to Mr. Henry’s involvement, AMEND Together has grown into a multi-sport juggernaut. Vanderbilt University’s football coach, Derek Mason, and his team went through AMEND training. The Tennessee State men’s basketball coach, Dana Ford, was on the AMEND board until he moved to Missouri State in March 2018. The former Vanderbilt basketball star and professional player Shan Foster serves as an AMEND director.

“Sean Henry has been one of the biggest advocates of ending this culture of violence against women and girls,”

said Mr. Foster. “He has donated commercial space, he has gotten his entire staff on board, we’ve done community forums that he hosted, completely free, and even after all of that, he pledged a half a million dollar gift to Y.W.C.A. and AMEND Together and encouraged other community and business leaders to get behind this.”

Mr. Henry committed \$500,000 over the course of five years to AMEND, and in the 2016-17 season the Nashville Predators paid their first \$100,000. For Mr. Henry, his philanthropic work, including the Nashville Predators Foundation and the Nashville Predators Youth Hockey programs, is just as important as selling out arenas or winning the team’s first Stanley Cup. The foundation funded more than \$1 million in programs and donations to over 400 local organizations in the 2016-17 season, and the Predators’ Hearts of Gold program generated more than 6,000 community service hours donated by employees, players and staff.

“It’s the most special environment that I’ve ever been involved with,” Mr. Henry said. “And I’ve been fortunate enough to work with many great organizations.”

The Predators also go beyond civic boundaries. They addressed the controversy around professional athletes protesting during the national anthem the same way they handle everything else: through dialogue. “We met with the players about the national anthem issue and asked them what they wanted to do,” Mr. Henry said, “and the guys all said they would stand for the anthem, but if somebody wanted to do something different, they were cool with that as well.” He added that P. K. Subban, who is black and grew up with immigrant Caribbean parents in Toronto, encouraged the team to further “engage the community.”

The Predators started Blue Line Buddies to try to connect with communities that have negative issues with the police, along with the police themselves. “We pick two po-



Photo courtesy of the Nashville Predators

Pekka Rinne (second from left), the Nashville Predators' goalie, with team E.V.P. and Chief Revenue Officer Chris Junghans (third from right) present a check for \$442,365.17 to the Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt University in 2017. The Predators have donated more than \$1.5 million to the Children's Hospital since 2010.

lice officers and two kids and we bring them to each home game,” Mr. Henry said. “Before the game they meet with P.K. and a few of our players, and then they have dinner in the restaurant. And during the game the kids are sitting with the police officers, and they get to know each other. The cops and the kids maintain contact throughout the year, and it has really changed lives and communities because everyone sees each other as people and not as stereotypes.”

Mr. Henry acknowledges that his vision is inspired by the ministry of engagement preached and practiced by Pope Francis. “You can issue edicts,” he said, “or you can have a conversation—and conversations work much better.”

The Catholic executives on the Nashville Predators say there is no secret handshake around the N.H.L. to identify other Catholics. They add that they do not care about a person's religion—it is the actions that matter. Mr. Henry said, “We built the culture in which guys can show their passions.”

Mr. Henry said that the N.H.L. has conference calls six or seven times a year, and its 31 clubs are “asked to share their best practices with each other, so we can build to-

gether.” The N.H.L. has no official chaplain policy, but individual teams can invite their own in, on approval of management and coaches. Hockey Ministries International, a lowercase “e” evangelical Christian organization, currently has chaplains serving a few N.H.L. teams. More often than not, a priest from Father Ryan High School will show up at the Predators game in a team jersey.

There is one hockey-fan priest from Father Ryan High School who likes to ask Mr. Henry which of the team's players are Catholic. Mr. Henry said he really does not know, and the priest just smiles and said, “Well, they all act like all are.”

As for the Predators, they would not mind if Pope Francis took a shine to hockey—and chose the gold jersey of Nashville's team as his jersey. “He should adopt us,” said Mr. Junghans. After all, the Predators, inspired by their Catholic leadership, have adopted the pope's vision of engaging with their world to make a cold sport much, much warmer.

Michael McKinley is a writer, television producer and filmmaker based in New York City. His most recent book is *Yardley's Ace: Making and Breaking American Military Intelligence*.

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Christians in the Public Square

Edited by Ashley McKinless

A conversation between Cornel West and Robert P. George



As part of America Media's "Civility in America" speaker series, Cornel West and Robert P. George sat down with America's editor in chief, Matt Malone, S.J., on Dec. 18 in the Sheen Center for Thought & Culture in New York, for a conversation about free speech on campus and the place of Christian witness in the public square. Since 2007, Professor West, a public intellectual and self-described "revolutionary Christian," and Professor George, a leading conservative legal scholar and Roman Catholic, have jointly taught an undergraduate humanities seminar at Princeton University.

Father Malone began the discussion by posing a question recently raised by another prominent conservative thinker, Arthur Brooks, who delivered America's John Courtney Murray, S.J., lecture in October 2018: When it comes to improving the public discourse in the United States, is bringing back "civility" enough? Should we instead speak of restoring love to our political debates?

Cornel West: The great Hannah Arendt was very suspicious of any talk of love in the public square precisely because of the variety and heterogeneity of viewpoints. As

Christians, we can enter in with our love baggage on the love train, but we have got some magnificent secular, agnostic and atheistic brothers and sisters, and they do not want to hear that love talk.

So we say: "O.K., if justice is what love looks like in public, let's talk about justice." They say: "Yeah, let's talk about justice." But from a Christian point of view, we are connecting it to the cross—the witness of a Palestinian Jew named Jesus. For them, they are connecting it to a discourse of benevolence or a whole host of other [kinds of discourse]. The important thing for Christians is not to talk about love but to exemplify it.

Robert P. George: We do believe that, eventually, the conversation does have to come around to love. You have to bear witness to truth in love, and we do not think you can permanently lay aside the question of the ultimate source and ground of our humanity and of the possibility of love. We are willing to engage our secular brothers and sisters on fair terms in a spirit of brotherhood, in a spirit of love.

We are not of the school that says keep religion in the



We are willing to engage our secular brothers and sisters on fair terms in a spirit of brotherhood, in a spirit of love. ●●

Ciaran Freeman

closet, keep God in the closet, don't talk about that stuff. We are not of the mind that says, "Keep faith out of the public square, keep faith out of the public dialogue, only talk in a language that is common ground." The trouble there is that you are reduced to the point where you are not talking to each other at all. The common language is not capable of reaching the fundamental issues that have to be addressed—the deep existential issues of meaning and value.

Because at the end of the day people want to know: Why should I love somebody else, especially if I disagree with him and I find his views or something about them disgusting or appalling? And so we have to be willing to engage that and take it on, and it is hard. The temptation is to run away from it, to just [keep the] peace and not engage. But I think the Christian faith is the ground of the possibility of mustering the courage to have somewhat uncomfortable conversations about deep issues that people do not always want to talk about.

West: I think we do have to draw the distinction between religion and politics. There is no religion that does

not have political consequences and effects. But you can have a nation-state that treats fellow citizens equally. So the Christians, Muslims, Jews, Buddhists, Hindus, agnostics, atheists and the latitudinarians and whatever other categories we have in place—they can still enter the public square and have exactly the same status.

But as Christians, we want to say that when we enter [the public square], we have our own assumptions and presuppositions that we are bringing. We have a lens through which we look at the world. And we look at the world through the lens of the cross. It is a very different way of looking at the world than through the lens of the stock market, through the lens of the laboratory or scientific authority. All of these might have a place, but the primary lens is through that cross that signifies truth and unconditional love across the board and the willingness to live [and] die in light of the witness of a Palestinian Jew who was crushed by the Roman Empire but somehow bounced back with some love drops at the bottom of that cross, that precious fountain.

George: Cornel is right when he says we have to ex-

The love that Jesus exemplifies is too rich and too deep to be contained by ideology and politics. ●●

emplify our Christian faith more than preach it. I think we have to practice this kind of dialogical engagement more than we have to preach it.

I think on the Princeton campus, to the extent that [Cornel and I] have been able to benefit the institution, it has just been in the doing, not in talking about what we are doing. It has shown that it is possible and it has benefits. And I cannot stress enough that this is not just about being polite to each other despite disagreeing. We can do so much better than that. We can engage with each other; we can try to learn from each other. We can acknowledge our own fallibility and the possibility that we might be wrong, whatever our view is about religion, about politics, about morality, and be open to learning from engagement with the other person.

If we do this, we will not only advance the cause of learning; we will advance the cause of democracy. You cannot run a democratic republic if people are not willing to engage each other and learn from each other and treat each other respectfully—not just out of politeness but out of a desire to advance the common good. James Madison in the 10th Federalist Paper warns that what has brought down republics historically has been faction. And you have to find a way to deal with faction. And he has a proposal for it in Federalist 10; and the Constitution is meant, in part, to come up with a way of dealing with that.

But it is not just formal structures of government, constitutional structures that are needed to do the work. You need a certain kind of citizen with a certain kind of virtue. Citizens who, despite disagreement, are willing to recognize each other as fellow citizens, as reasonable people of good will. To engage with each other, be willing to learn from each other, be willing, occasionally, believe it or not, to change your mind and not just be dogmatic.

West: The great W. E. B. DuBois says in *The Souls of Black Folk* that honest criticism is the soul of democracy. And what he means by that is what the Greeks call *paideia*, which is a formation of attention, that cultivation of the critical self and the maturation of a loving soul willing to raise one's voice. And that is the anthem of black people: Just like a jazz orchestra, you have got to lift every voice. Not an echo but a voice that is distinctly, uniquely your own—conclusions you reach through your own wrestling with what is going on inside and outside of you.

In his great text *The Public and Its Problems*, John Dewey says if, in fact, there is no longer a civic virtue that facilitates critical reflection, the maturation of a self, things public will be degraded and trashed—public conversation, public education, public health care, all the things that sit at the center of a democratic project—and you lose your democracy.

Now one of the things about brother Robby and me at the university that helps us go against the grain is that neither one of us is liberals, and forms of liberalism are hegemonic in the university. He is a conservative Christian; I am a revolutionary Christian. When we look at liberalism, we say: "Oh, there are some wonderful elements there. We're against monarchy, too. We're for rights, too. We're for liberties, too. We're for certain kind of regulations, too." But it seems to be so spiritually empty, it can be colonized by Marxism and hedonism and narcissism and greed in the name of liberalism. A moral rot begins to set in, and you do

Ciaran Freeman





Cornel West and Robert P. George at the Sheen Center on Dec. 18, 2018.

not have any counter-voices that have religious and nonreligious sources left.

When brother Robby and I come together at the university, we really are going against the grain—and we are Socratic in that sense, refusing to conform to the hegemony of the day. We are *atopos*—unclassifiable, un-subsumable. That is what they used to call Socrates: He is *atopos*; he does not fit. Now Jesus, who weeps—Socrates never cried—he is also *atopos*; he does not fit under one particular school of thought, one ideology, one politics, because the love that he exemplifies is too rich and too deep to be contained by any human construction having to do with ideology and politics.

But he tilts toward the weak. This is the great revolution in the species: the Hebrew Scripture that says to be human is to spread steadfast love and loving kindness to the stranger, the motherless, the fatherless, the weak, the persecuted, the oppressed, the exploited. And Jesus comes directly out of that prophetic Judaic tradition. That is a very different way of looking at the world when it comes to not just America but every nation. That is why every flag is under the cross, including the American flag, and you can get in trouble saying that.

George: Richard John Neuhaus always made the point

that to be a nation under God is to be a nation under judgment. We should aspire to be, as our motto says, a nation under God: “One nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.” But that should trigger in all of us the recognition that we are a nation under judgment. We answer to a higher power.

This is the great central point of Martin Luther King’s “Letter From Birmingham Jail.” King is at pains to point out that no one is firmer than he in his belief in law. Without law, the weak, the vulnerable, the despised would be defenseless against the powerful. We need law. Human law is good, but human law can go bad. And that means we have to recognize that there is a higher law, a natural law, a law of God that is the reference point, the standard by which we judge the justice or injustice of the human law.

So while our ordinary obligation is to obey the human law, where the human law is not in sync with the higher law, we are not only not under an obligation, necessarily, to obey it. Often we would be under an obligation to break it. But that is only true if there is, in fact, a higher law.

Ashley McKinless is an associate editor of *America*.

WALKING AWAY FROM ESPN

By Nick Genovese

I turned down my dream job
to work in student ministry.
Now what?





About a year after graduating from college, I found myself sitting across the table from an ESPN executive at ABC's headquarters in New York City. From my cushioned seat, I took a look around me—a sleek desk covered in plaques and awards, iconic sports photos mounted on the walls, a panoramic view of midtown Manhattan. I started to get ambitious thoughts: This could be me one day.

Working at ESPN had been my dream since my sports-obsessed childhood. In middle school, I created a highlight video of a player on the Indianapolis Colts, my favorite N.F.L. team (yes, unusual for a boy from New York). Gary Brackett, a linebacker and then defensive captain of the Colts, discovered the video I made of him on YouTube. He asked me to make another video, a career highlight video, to show at his annual charity event later in the week. I told him it would be my honor.

Soon his teammates were asking if I could make highlight videos for them, too. Since then, I have edited hundreds of highlight montages and short-form videos for the Indianapolis Colts, the Boston College football team and various collegiate and professional football players.

The ESPN executive apparently took notice of my videos. "I have seen your work, and I know how passionate you are about sports media," he told me. "I think you have great potential at this company."

He slid a document across the table—a contract for an entry-level job at ESPN. My heart leapt as I surveyed the document, my lifelong dream manifested on the paper in front of me.

Then we made small talk.

"So what did you study at B.C.?"

"Theology and film."

"Wow, that's unique! And what do you do now?"

"I help edit and produce videos for a Catholic media company."

The conversation somehow turned into a discussion of my faith formation over the last several years. I explained my background in theology and campus ministry during my college years at Boston College, as well as my time as an O'Hare fellow at America Media.

He listened attentively, nodding his head. He then asked: "So you're going to give all of that up for sports?"

I believe he meant it as a harmless joke. But something about these words led me into an internal crisis. The question seemed to put my love for sports in conflict with my Catholic ideals. Somewhere deep within me, I came to realize that this career path could potentially compromise who I have become as a person of faith.

In the next few moments, I tried to convince myself that I did indeed want the position at ESPN and that I was crazy to think otherwise. But I couldn't go through with it.

I told the executive that I was not going to take the job. At first he was confused, then angry, and he told me I had wasted his time. I can't blame him. I thanked the man for his time, left the office and walked out on what minutes before had been my dream job.

Filled with despair, I crossed the street, sat down on a bench in Central Park and burst into tears. *Why did I do that? How could have I walked out on my dream? What am I now going to do with my life?*

I sat with these questions for about an

hour. Eventually, for some reason, I sifted through my wallet. I pulled out a business card of a former mentor of mine from Boston College who had since become the president of an all-boys Catholic college preparatory school in West Roxbury, Mass. It sparked an idea.

I rushed back to my dorm and composed a lengthy email to my mentor. I wasn't necessarily inquiring about a job but rather seeking consolation and guidance on what to do next with my life.

The timing was impeccable. The next morning, the president replied that a position had recently opened up at his school to work in campus ministry and teach theology. A few days later, I traveled up to Boston, interviewed for the job and accepted the offer.

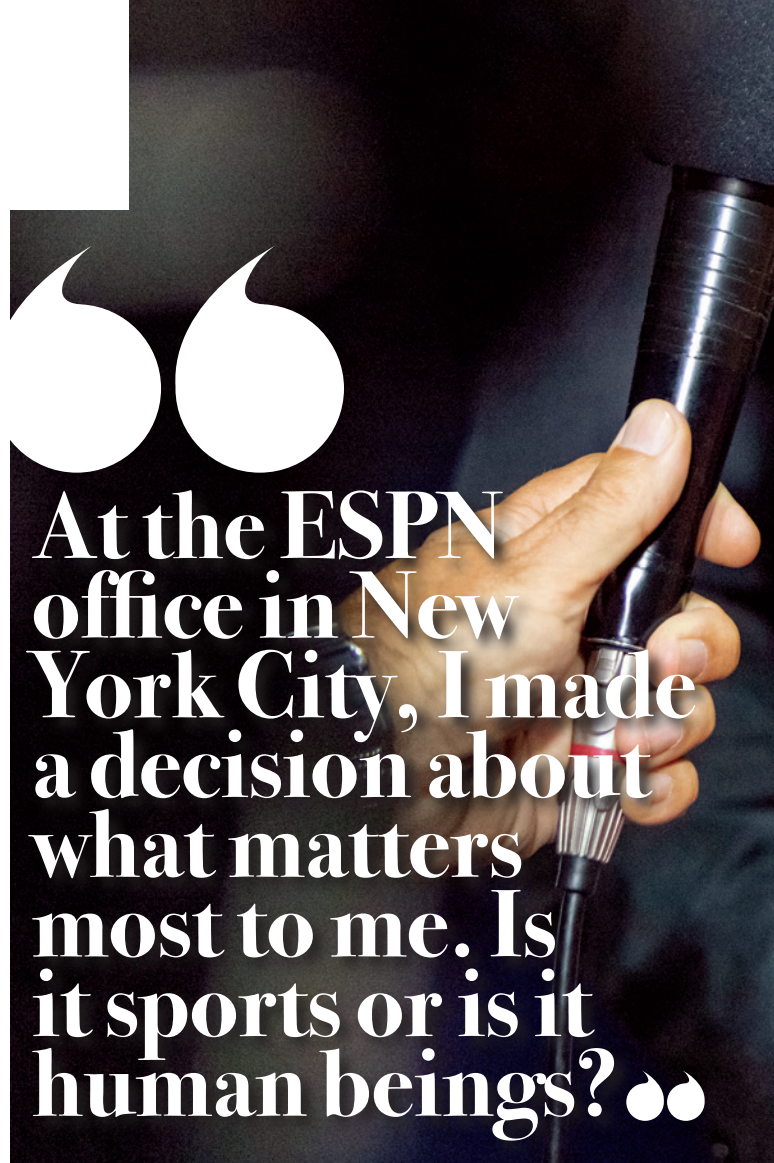
The school year began in September. I wore many hats and changed them often. I coordinated a year-long service and immersion program, taught four sophomore theology classes, coached two middle-school sports, created a platform for staff and faculty to share their personal faith, assisted with liturgies, service programs and retreats, and most important, provided pastoral care for over 600 boys at the school.

Those first nine months were the most exhausting and demanding of my 24-year-old life. The work day typically lasted from 6:30 a.m. until 5 p.m. My gas tank was seemingly on reserve for most of the school year. I nearly pulled an all-nighter for the first time since college preparing an on-campus retreat (which was canceled due to a snow day). I returned from a service and immersion trip to the Dominican Republic over April break with severe bronchitis that lasted for weeks.

The demands of my job led me to deep frustration, anger and exhaustion. But even more demoralizing was the constant interior questioning of my decision to forgo a career at ESPN. *Is this lifestyle of campus ministry and teaching worth it? Is "living my faith" worth this anger and frustration I feel daily? At ESPN, perhaps I could be making a six-figure salary in a matter of years and have more personal time on my hands. I would not be exhausted at almost every waking moment.*

Why am I doing this?

The school year finally came to an end. One day during the summer, I was watching ESPN at a pizzeria when the words *for the love of sports* came on the screen. They gave me the beginnings of an answer. Why did I chose ministry over sports media? For the love of the person, the whole person.



At the ESPN office in New York City, I made a decision about what matters most to me. Is it sports or is it human beings? ●●

I realized that my visceral reaction to prioritizing sports over faith a year before was more fundamental than comparing two career paths. It was a choice about working for a system or for a person, for an idea or for a living human being. At the ESPN office in New York City, I made a decision about what matters most to me. Is it sports or is it human beings? Do I work for the love of sports or for the love of the person?

My work at the school is not for the love of sports, or at least not directly. After all, an all-boys school in Boston is naturally a very sports-centric institution. Most boys play at least one sport per season, talk incessantly about the Patriots, Bruins, Celtics and Red Sox and believe Tom Brady and Jesus Christ are synonymous.

What I have come to understand, though, is that sports cannot be the end in itself. A vocation in sports, a system, cannot supersede the vocation of serving a human being. Sports promote human flourishing but only as a means of personal formation, not as ends in and



of themselves.

A career in sports media and a career in Catholic education are not diametrically opposed. Both ESPN and Catholic education serve human beings. Through game highlights and athlete interviews, or lesson plans and service programs, both aim to care for the person. However, one career allows me to serve the person more widely, deeply and directly than the other.

My job at Catholic Memorial School is to care for the whole person—in this case, the adolescent boy being transformed by the world around him. Sports have a vital role in this transformation, but equally important are the big academic and spiritual questions. Why are we brought into being and for what purpose? Questions like these extend the students' horizons far beyond what sports and entertainment can offer.

As a campus minister and educator, my greatest day-to-day task is the practice of hospitality—providing the open space for boys to encounter God. The task

of hospitality requires physical spaces other than just the gymnasium and athletic fields. It also requires the classroom, the faculty office, the hallway and cafeteria, the chapel, the local parish and Boston itself. All of these spaces, in tandem, allow for the care of the whole person, which a sports venue and production studios alone fail to offer.

I believe I can find God everywhere—in all things and places. Sports are not excluded from God's grace. But faith cannot be reduced to an idea or a system. It has to be centered upon and enlivened through a person—Jesus Christ, God incarnate. And I see the face of Jesus in the high school students I serve every day. There is no greater privilege I could ever have. And in my lifetime, there has been no greater joy.

Nick Genovese was a Joseph A. O'Hare, S.J., fellow at America Media in 2016-17. He teaches and ministers at Catholic Memorial School in West Roxbury, Mass.

Courtside Sister

By Zac Davis

Jean Dolores Schmidt, B.V.M., hardly needs an introduction. As the Loyola University Chicago men's basketball team shocked the nation with its Cinderella run to the Final Four of the N.C.A.A. tournament in 2018, Sister Jean, the team's chaplain, became an international symbol of hope and faith. I met Sister Jean as an undergraduate student at Loyola and called her ahead of this year's March Madness to ask her what she wants her athletes—and the rest of us—to know about her faith and who God is. (The interview has been edited for length and clarity.)



CNS photo/courtesy Loyola University Chicago

How do you pray with the team?

When we pray together before a game, we do it right in the concourse of the Gentile [Arena], and they are just very serious when we pray. I never talk about [the losses] in our prayer because I don't want them depressed in a way. So last week, after they had lost a game, I said, I think it is time for me to bless their hands. Each one came by me and put out their hands, and I made the sign of the cross on their hands and asked God to bless them.

What do you want the players to know about who God is?

I want them to know that God plays an important part in their lives; and sometimes in my prayer with them, I say, "God loves every one of us, and each one out on that court is your brother; so no matter who it is, we are all creatures of God."

So when you pray with team, you're praying for them to win, right?

That's right.

Does that mean you're praying against the other team?

No, not really. I pray with the fans, and I pray for the other team, too. Sometimes I've had the opponents stop me in the concourse when I go work the crowd and they say to me, "Sister Jean, I notice you pray a little harder for Loyola." And I say, "Well, if you wore maroon and gold, you would do that too."

Why do you pray for the whole crowd before games?

I do it because, first of all, I just think that students need to hear about God. Even though they might not be practicing religion, I keep saying to parents who are worried about their children not going to Mass or other parents in

other religions whose children are not going to their own church services: "Don't worry about them, they're going to come back. They're going to find out that they need God, and so they'll come back. I have great faith in them, and I have great faith in their church."

Do you have any favorite prayers?

I make my morning meditation every day. I use the Gospel of the day for my meditation because I think it's important that I follow a certain routine rather than just take a book and what somebody else has written. I just take what the Gospel stories have and think about it. Then I'm old-fashioned in certain ways. I pray the rosary. Or I read a prayer every day that refreshes my own faith and my own trust and my own hope.

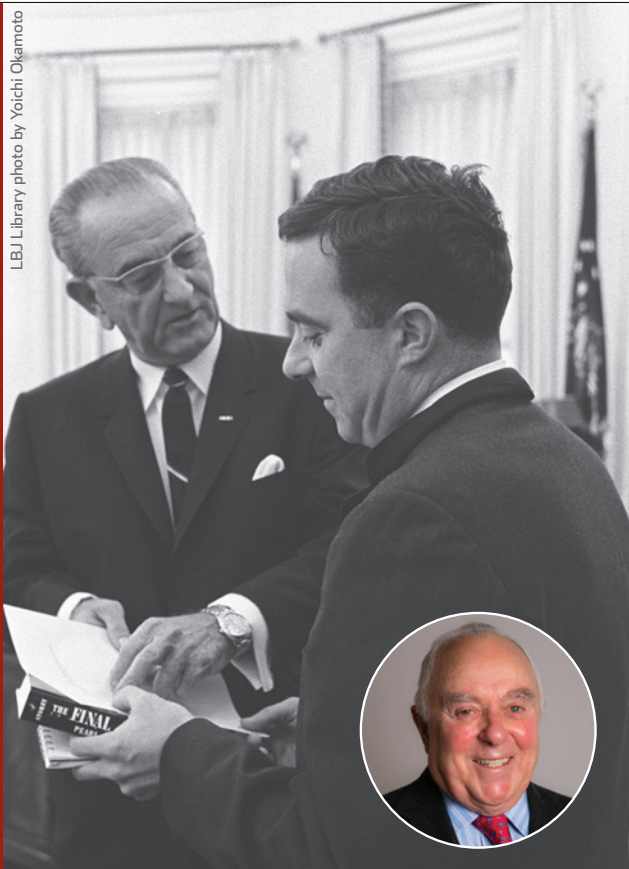
I did an interview with a fellow from CBS, Tim Doyle, where he pretended he was going to confession with me. He said, "Sister Jean, I know I'm not supposed to go to confession to you." But he says, "I'm just kind of losing my faith in the Rambler team because they've lost two hard games." I said: "You can't lose faith. If you lose faith, then you're going to lose hope; and if you lose both of those, you're probably going to lose love as well." I believe that. If we lose faith, then we don't have hope. And if we lose two of those theological virtues, then the love is bound to go as well.

So, I have to ask: How far is Loyola going to make it this year?

I think it all depends on who's on the brackets. The young men hope to go to the Final Four; that's their goal. I could probably answer that question when the brackets are out.

Zac Davis is an associate editor of *America*.

LBJ Library photo by Yoichi Okamoto



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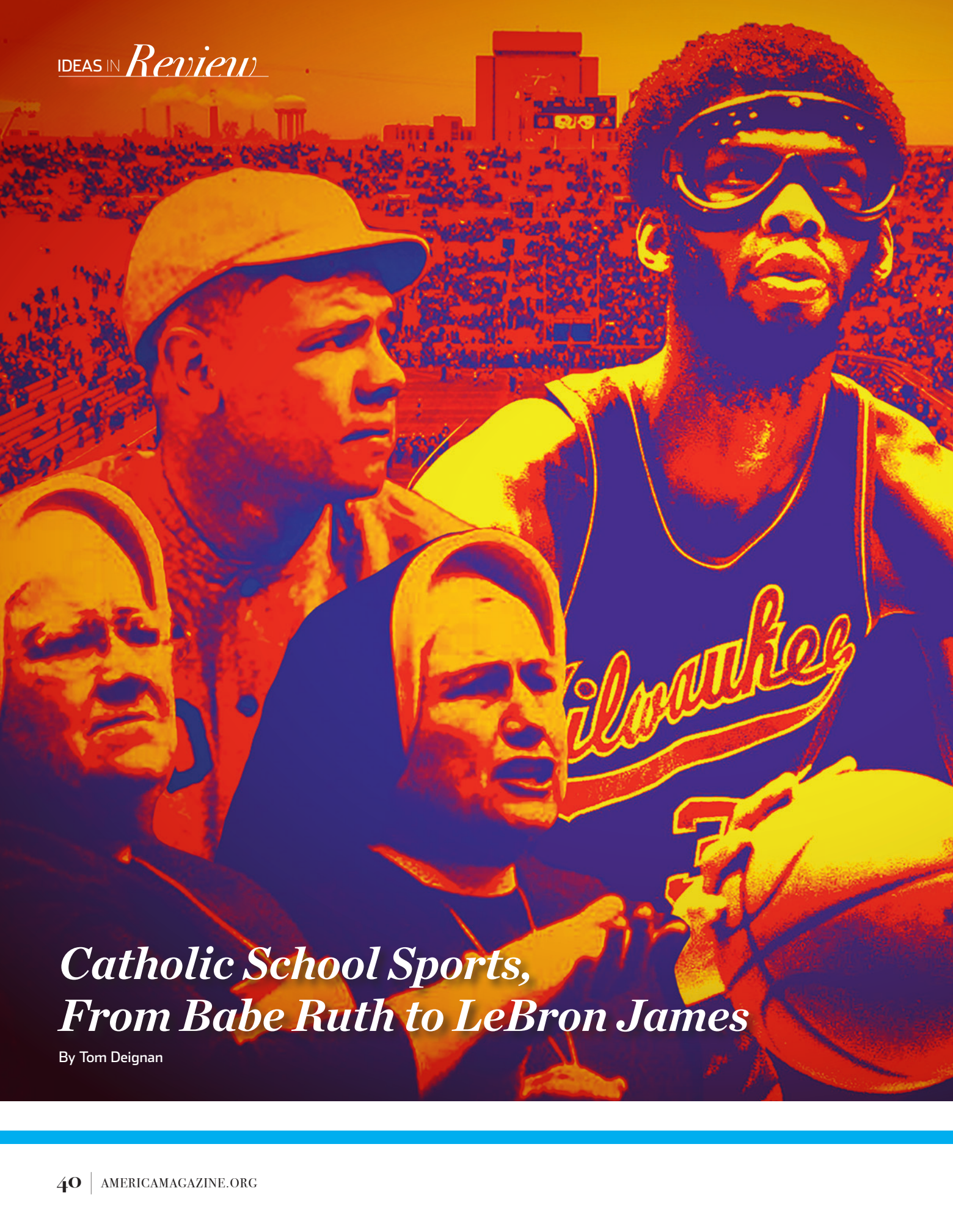
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Catholic School Sports, From Babe Ruth to LeBron James

By Tom Deignan



Ciaran Freeman, Immaculata University

There is no way to explain the success of Catholic school athletes without taking into account a wide range of factors—historical, sociological and spiritual.

Around the time James Naismith contemplated hanging a peach basket on the wall of a gym at the Y.M.C.A. International Training School in Springfield, Mass., the bishop of Cleveland, Richard Gilmour, was conferring with his parish clergy. Gilmour—a few years prior to Naismith’s creation of a new game called “basket ball”—had charged the Rev. Thomas F. Mahar, the pastor of St. Vincent Catholic Church, with opening a new parish to serve rapidly growing neighborhoods in south Akron.

It took a few years—Naismith is credited with inventing basketball in 1891, the same year Bishop Gilmour died at the age of 66—but Akron’s St. Mary parish was finally established in 1896. A century later, after the high schools serving St. Vincent and St. Mary parishes merged, the Fighting Irish successfully recruited a group of highly touted basketball players collectively known as “the Fab Four.” Among them was an Akron native named LeBron James.

Today, the North Maple Street campus of St. Vincent-St. Mary is home to the recently renovated 1,800-seat LeBron James Arena, purchased with a \$1 million donation from the school’s most famous graduate. And while arguments rage about whether James or Michael Jordan is the best basketball player ever, what cannot be debated is that James is just one of many elite athletes with close ties to Catholic educational institutions.

Look no further than the annual March Madness of the N.C.A.A.’s bas-

ketball tournament. Each and every year, Catholic colleges and universities are well represented. And each year, pundits express shock at what The New York Times in March 2018 dubbed “an undeniable fact.” In college basketball, The Times asserted, “Catholic schools have long punched well above their weight.”

But it is not just men’s college basketball, even if the last three N.C.A.A. Division I Men’s tournaments produced two Augustinian champions (Villanova in 2016 and 2018), a Jesuit runner-up (Gonzaga fell to North Carolina in 2017) and a genuine Catholic folk hero, in the form of 98-year-old Sister Jean Dolores Schmidt, Loyola Chicago’s team chaplain and most energetic fan during the Ramblers’ highly unlikely run to the Final Four in 2018. Catholic schools have also excelled in women’s basketball. In the early 1970s, Philadelphia’s Immaculata University “won the first three de facto national women’s basketball championships,” The Times noted, while the University of Notre Dame’s women’s team has appeared in five title games since 2011, winning the national championship in 2018.

Then there is high school football. Throughout the 2018 season, eight Catholic schools were consistently ranked in USA Today’s top 10 high school programs in the country.

As for college football, you may have heard that Notre Dame has quite a storied football history, posting one of its most impressive seasons ever in 2018.

In college basketball, The New York Times asserted, ‘Catholic schools have long punched well above their weight.’

That Old-Time Religion

There is a temptation to say that the athletic success of Catholic schools simply comes down to money. They attract students who are able to pay hefty tuition fees; and, the argument goes, the rich can afford resources that give them a distinct advantage. But LeBron James was not rich. Neither was George Herman “Babe” Ruth, whose parents were so overwhelmed by work responsibilities (they lived above a saloon they ran) and family tragedy (as many as five of Ruth’s siblings died in infancy), they sent 7-year-old George to St. Mary’s Industrial School for Boys in 1902, where the strapping Brother Matthias Boutilier introduced the young Babe to baseball.

The N.B.A. Hall of Famers Bob Cousy (Holy Cross) and Patrick Ewing (Georgetown) were both the sons of immigrants (and Ewing an immigrant himself). As were at least some of the 150 graduates of St. Anthony’s High School in Jersey City who earned full scholarships to Division I colleges after playing for legendary coach Bob Hurley, who won over two dozen state titles before the school was forced to close because of financial pressures in 2017.

In short, there is no way to explain the success of Catholic school athletes without taking into account a wide range of factors—historical, sociological and, yes, spiritual.

That is certainly what Villanova University’s president, Peter M. Donohue, O.S.A., believes. “Our Augustinian values are a part of how our coaches lead, how our student-athletes compete and how our fans come together to support the Wildcats,” Father Donohue told **America** by e-mail. “Each year our student-athletes and coaches sign ‘The Foundation,’ pledging their commitment to the university’s values of *veritas, unitas* and *caritas* (truth, unity and love). The pledge is a symbol of why they are at Villanova, what they are part of and that they are committed to something bigger than themselves.”

For well over a century, Christianity and athletics have engaged in a complex dance. On the one hand, sports were often linked to vice—gambling, drinking—and Sunday sporting events were all seen, to varying degrees, as corrupt. On the other hand, two decades after the Y.M.C.A. was founded in 1844 in London, a New York chapter cited its mission as “the improvement of the spiritual, mental, social *and physical* condition of young men” (emphasis added).

Athletics and Academics

This emphasis on the spiritual benefits of athletics—especially given the struggles Catholic immigrants and their children faced in big cities—led to one of the more influential sports programs of the 20th century: the Catholic Youth Organization.

“Sports and religion became linked in American culture during the progressive era,” writes Timothy B. Neary in *Crossing Parish Boundaries: Race, Sports, and Catholic Youth in Chicago, 1914-1954*. “Protestantism’s ‘muscular Christianity,’ exemplified by the YMCA...later became a model for the CYO.”

From basketball to boxing, bowling to baseball, generations of urban youth—“boys and girls...without regard to race, creed or color,” as its original 1932 charter put it—were exposed to sports and spirituality through C.Y.O. leagues.

Catholic school student-athletes did not achieve success only on the court. In the late 1940s, “Holy Cross brought structure to [Bob] Cousy’s life and Cousy’s thinking,” writes Gary Pomerantz in his recent book *The Last Pass: Cousy, Russell, the Celtics, and What Matters in the End* (reviewed in this issue of **America**). Cousy’s course work at Holy Cross “reflected the intellectual rigor and humanistic philosophies of a Jesuit education,” which resulted in Cousy thinking deeply “about prejudice and racism.” Cousy, a child of French immigrants, even wrote “a senior thesis...on the persecution of minority groups, with a focus on anti-Semitism.”

None of which prepared Cousy for the intense bigotry faced by teammates like Chuck Cooper (the N.B.A.’s first African-American draftee) and Hall of Famer Bill Russell (also the graduate of a Jesuit school, the University of San Francisco) as they built the great Celtics dynasty of the 1950s.

Racial tensions in the United States only intensified in the 1960s, a dynamic starkly illustrated by the high

school career of the great Lew Alcindor. The future Kareem Abdul-Jabbar led Harlem's Power Memorial Academy (founded and run by the Irish Christian Brothers) to a 71-game winning streak in the 1960s, on its way to being voted the greatest high school basketball team of the 20th century. But Abdul-Jabbar has written at length of his "shaky" relationship to Catholicism and those years at Power, mainly because of the racism he endured.

Baseball was Abdul-Jabbar's "first love," but to get to the playing field he had to bike through Manhattan's Good Shepherd Parish, "which was all Irish," he writes in his recent book *Becoming Kareem: Growing Up On and Off the Court*. Abdul-Jabbar and his friends were assaulted with all manner of racial slurs and traveled in a group to protect themselves. "I couldn't help but wonder how they could worship at a Catholic church and receive the same Christian lessons on loving your neighbor that I got, yet be filled with such rage and hatred," Abdul-Jabbar writes.

And in what Abdul-Jabbar describes as his "greatest betrayal," his coach Jack Donahue, "the adult I trusted most, besides my parents," also addressed him using a racist slur. Donahue later claimed it was a motivational tactic, but to Abdul-Jabbar, it was just the latest in a long string of bigotry he could not help but associate with Catholics.

But if conflict was dominant, there was also a counter-narrative, as Professor Neary has emphasized. Starting in the 1930s, the C.Y.O. founder and bishop of Chicago Bernard Sheil "brought together thousands of young people of all races and religions from Chicago's racially segregated neighborhoods to take part in sports and educational programs."

Sheil was a Chicago native, born in 1886, "the only child of second generation Irish American Catholics Rosella Bartley Sheil and James Bernard Sheil Sr.," Neary writes. Bishop Sheil founded the C.Y.O. in the wake of terrible race riots to spur positive social interaction among black, Irish and other urban kids.

"The history of Bishop Sheil and the CYO," Neary's book notes, "shows a cosmopolitan version of American Catholicism, one that is usually overshadowed by accounts of white ethnic Catholics aggressively resisting the racial integration of their working-class neighborhoods."

Impressive Integration

As terrible as that resistance was, there was also significant progress. In fact, the mid-century offspring of both the European and African diasporas who benefitted from C.Y.O. programs and moved through Catholic high schools conducted an oft-ignored (and impressive) integration project of their own.

Consider the impressive Villanova basketball teams of the early 1970s, including the N.C.A.A. tournament runner-up in 1971. Those Wildcats featured black and white students from Catholic high schools, like Hank Siemiontkowski, Tom Ingelsby and Chris Ford. Similarly, mid-70s Marquette squads (including the 1977 champs) featured diverse standouts like Lloyd Walton out of Chicago's Mount Carmel High School and Jim Boylan from St. Mary's in Jersey City.

Into the 1980s, other Catholic school basketball teams were also finding success with racially mixed squads. St. John's had Frank Gilroy, Mark Jackson and Chris Mullin, while Georgetown featured Terry Fenlon, Patrick

Ewing and Al Dutch. All of this culminated in the magical 1985 Final Four, featuring St. John's, Georgetown, Villanova and (the only non-Catholic team) Memphis State. The result was Villanova's stunning 66-64 victory over heavily favored Georgetown.

This was in some ways the culmination of a century-long experiment in physical, social and spiritual education. Those 1985 teams would send numerous players to the N.B.A. Just as important, less prominent reserve players went out into the world and became college and high school coaches, mentors, successful entrepreneurs and, ultimately, one hopes, better men.

It does not seem like an accident that when, in 2015, Richard E. Lapchick, the director of the Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport, created an all-time N.B.A. All-Star team *with a social conscience*, Bob Cousy, Bill Russell and Kareem Abdul-Jabbar were three of the starting five.

And so, at the 1985 Final Four, along with thousands of screaming fans, also present were the legends of Brother Matthias and Bernard Sheil and Bill Russell and Lew Alcindor. This legacy may well be imperfect. But as any fan cheering on the 2019 St. Vincent-St. Mary Fighting Irish can tell you, it is also a work very much still in progress.

Tom Deignan, a contributor to the recent book *Nine Irish Lives*, has written about history and religion for *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post* and *The National Catholic Reporter*.

Saint Brendan's Round Boat

By Ted Kooser

Saint Brendan started out over the sea
in a basketwork bird nest that resisted
its rudder, a long pole of a paddle.

It wanted to turn, the stern rocking around
to the front, taking the place of the bow,
the bow to the stern, port to starboard

around and around, the Lord possibly
wanting the good saint and his brothers
to be able to see what was coming,

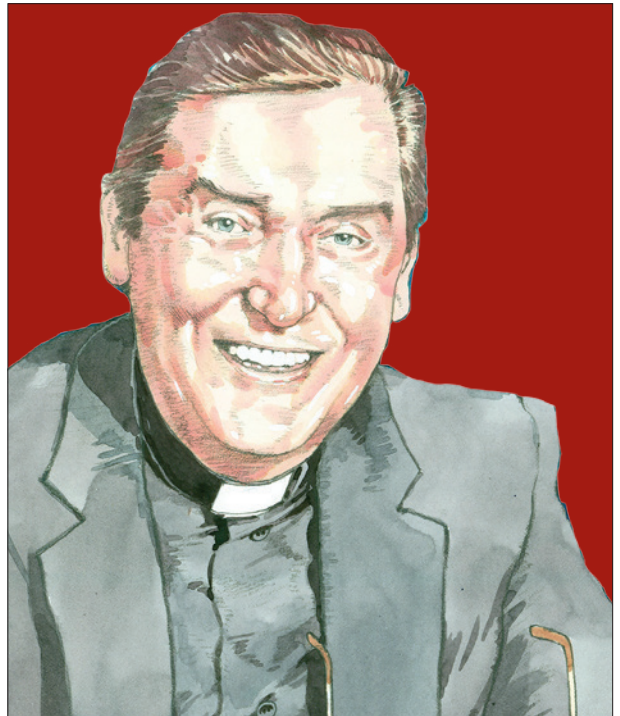
while at the same time reflecting upon
the wake of good works falling behind,
all this while the present spun dizzily

round and around, the improvident rudder
slapping the tops of the waves, the saint
standing up in his bird nest, one holy hand

holding onto the bow as it spun around
into the stern, the other out pointing
the way, as the way turned around him,

the way which was every which way,
his rosary dipping down into the waves,
then up, dripping away from his fingers.

Ted Kooser's most recent collection of poetry is *kindest Regards: New and Selected Poems*, from *Copper Canyon Press*, 2018. His fourth children's picture book, *Mr. Posey's New Glasses*, is to be published by *Candlewick Press* in April 2019. He is a former U.S. poet laureate.



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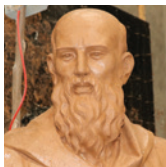
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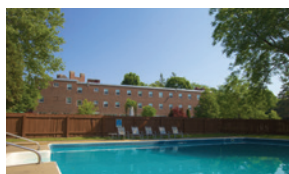
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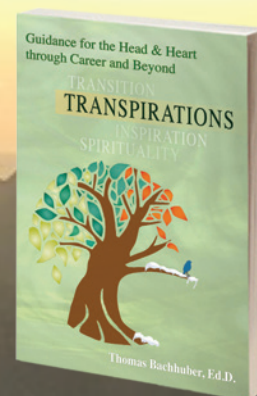
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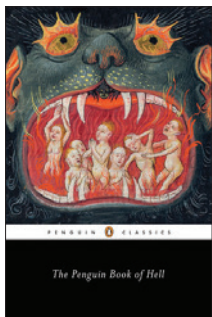


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A place of pure despair

By Nick Ripatrazone



The Penguin Book of Hell

By Scott G. Bruce
Penguin Classics
304p \$17

“Dealer’s Choice,” an episode from the 1980s revival of “The Twilight Zone,” portrays a poker game in a suburban New Jersey home. One of the players, Nick, is new; he is filling in at the table for his cousin. Nick is mysterious, a bit sly and keeps getting dealt sixes. His true identity is soon revealed. A character played by Morgan Freeman asks, “What’s the devil doing here in New Jersey?” I’ll never forget how another character answered: “What are you talking about, Tony? I think he lives here!”

As a kid named Nick, watching that episode in a suburban New Jersey home myself, I was scared. These

were the years of the so-called Satanic Panic; when even Geraldo Rivera, having been unable to find anything in Al Capone’s vault, turned his investigative eye toward devil worship. I was terrified of all things occult and wasn’t happy to learn that “Old Nick” is an English name for the devil. “Rosemary’s Baby” and “The Exorcist” cultivated a healthy fear of the devil that has never gone away for me.

“Dealer’s Choice” is not a work of horror or even suspense: It is a comedy. Of course, the devil would descend upon New Jersey (in another episode of the show, “I of Newton,” a demon wears a shirt that reads “Hell Is a City Much Like Newark”). When the other men at the table learn the devil’s identity, they are scared—but they don’t stop cracking jokes. In true Jersey fashion, they beat the devil at his own game.

The devil’s game, and home, has been the subject of endless interpretations. *The Penguin Book of Hell* is a new collection of religious and cultural visions of hell. Edited by Scott G.

Bruce, a medieval historian and former gravedigger, the book considers Greek and Roman imaginations of the dead, as well as the Hebrew conception of Sheol and the early Christian idea of Gehenna. But there’s a Catholic bent to the book, with excerpts from the *Summa Theologica*, Dante’s *Inferno*, the writings of the Redemptorist priest John Furniss in the mid-19th century and even the enigmatic *Vision of Tundale*—composed 200 years before Dante’s vision.

A visceral, meandering journey through hell written by a 12th-century Irish monk living in Regensburg, the *Vision of Tundale* does not have the focus of Dante’s later work—yet its confusing nature makes the narrative feel eerily authentic. Tundale, an Irish knight, feels terror when his soul passes from his body after his apparent death. Unable to return to his earthly form, his “wretched soul” is soon surrounded by a “great multitude of unclean spirits.” They fill the house, the courtyard and the streets;



An image of hell from the Duomo in Florence (Stock)

The idea of hell “has remained tenacious in Western thought,” writes Scott Bruce, noting that “the word has lost none of its religious currency.”

and they are there not to console him, but to announce his eternal resting place.

Yet the frightening, claustrophobic scene ends with the arrival of an angel sent by God. He first rebukes Tundale for not following the Lord, but then reveals his true purpose: “Be very happy and untroubled, because you will suffer only a few of the many torments that you would have suffered if the mercy of our redeemer had not come down to you.” The angel brings Tundale to hell, where he is shown punishments in hopes that his soul will return to his body—cleansed and penitent.

Hell includes murderers, who are tossed among fiery coals. The sinners who reach the scalding iron lid “were burned until they were reduced entirely to liquid, like fat rendered in a frying pan.” Then, like “wax is strained through a cloth,” they are made whole again to be tormented further. Later, he sees the prideful attempt to cross a single-plank bridge spanning a thousand feet. They tumble into the burning river below.

Finally, Tundale sees the devil, who was “the blackest black like a raven, with the shape of a human body from its feet to its head, except that it had many hands and a tail.” The devil’s 1,000 hands each had 20 fingers; its nails “longer than the lances of soldiers and made of iron.” A disturbing vision, and yet the monk who composed this story includes a clever touch: when tortured souls escaped the devil’s grasp, he whipped them with his tail—“in this way the wretched beast struck itself in its in-

cessant lashings. Inflicting punishments on souls, it was tortured by its own torments.”

In his introduction to *The Penguin Book of Hell*, Bruce notes that hell “has remained tenacious in Western thought.” Despite our cultural tendency to use the word to express difficulty or extremes, “the word has lost none of its religious currency.” Writing from a secular perspective, Bruce concludes that hell remains the “dominant metaphor” for the punitive afterlife. Hell represents unending, unforgiving punishment: a place of pure despair.

In Dante’s vision of that despair, the devil is grotesque, blasphemy made flesh. He is massive, three-faced: “With six eyes he wept, and down his three chins/ Trickled his tear drops and his drool mingled with blood.” He chews and claws at Judas, Brutus and Cassius. The brutal image sticks, but equally common in fiction and film is the devil as trickster: the prototypical liar, slanderer, conniver. Even when the devil is not physically present, as in Jean-Paul Sartre’s atheist vision of hell in “No Exit,” his miserable spirit creates ruin.

The result is an interesting paradox: What does it mean when a thoroughly religious idea runs through the fabric of popular culture, entertainment and storytelling? Does it affect the theological resonance, turning the devil into a joke?

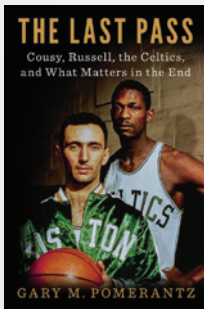
The Catholic vision of hell has a complicated history. In a 1999 address, Pope John Paul II said hell “is not a punishment imposed externally by God but a development of premises already set by people in this life.” Hell is the “state of those who definitively reject the Father’s mercy.” In a theo-

logical sense, this state is spiritual, not geographic. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* describes a descent into hell, where the punishments are “eternal fire”—but “the chief punishment of hell is separation from God.” This estrangement is the antithesis of heaven, which is union with God.

The Penguin Book of Hell is full of classic representations of eternal punishment—scenes from Homer’s *Odyssey*, Virgil’s *Aeneid*, Dante’s *Inferno*—yet perhaps the most immediately disturbing of the texts collected in this anthology is the section titled “Hell of Our Own Making.” There is the internal hell of the jackhammer-loud, pulsing music churned into Guantánamo detainees during interrogation. The inconceivable terror of the Nazi extermination camp at Treblinka, about which the Russian journalist Vasily Grossman said, “Not even Dante, in his Hell, saw scenes like this.” And the atomic evisceration of Japan as described by Yoshitaka Kawamoto, thinking back to when he was a child: “I could hear sobs. Someone was calling his mother. But those who were still alive were singing the school song for as long as they could. I think I joined the chorus. We thought someone would come and help us out. But nobody came to help, and we stopped singing one by one. In the end, I was singing alone.”

Hell truly is other people—without love.

Nick Ripatrzone has written for *Rolling Stone*, *The Atlantic*, *The Paris Review* and *Esquire*. His newest book is *Ember Days*, a collection of stories.



The Last Pass
Cousy, Russell, and
What Matters in
the End

By Gary M. Pomerantz
Penguin Press
384p \$28

A dynasty's glory and shame

When I visit my Irish Catholic parents in the house in which I grew up, two kinds of images stare at me from the walls: crucifixes and framed photographs of Celtics players. Bob Cousy and Bill Russell, team members of the original Celtics dynasty that won 11 N.B.A. titles in 13 seasons in the 1950s and 1960s, top any basketball fan's list of the Greats. So sitting down to read *The Last Pass: Cousy, Russell, and What Matters in the End* was nostalgic for me, even though I was born decades after Bob Cousy's run with the Celts.

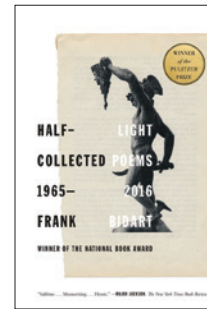
Gary Pomerantz's detailed journey through Cousy's life as a ballplayer and public figure features Bill Russell as the pre-eminent foil of "the Cooz." It also chronicles Cousy's journey from the streets of Queens to the halls of Holy Cross and to the N.B.A. draft of 1950, years before Russell arrived on the scene. From over 50 interviews with Cousy, and dozens more with teammates, colleagues and friends, the story of the quiet only child of two immigrants unfolds.

Cousy's personality, his skills and his image helped him emerge as the face of the N.B.A. during

the tumult of the 1950s and 1960s. Cousy was revered in Boston and on the road. In contrast, when Bill Russell joined the Celtics as a rookie in 1956, he was the only African-American player on the team in an era of unspoken racial quotas in the league. Pomerantz says that while Russell won 11 titles for Boston, he was never beloved by Celtics fans. Russell more than once described Boston as "the most prejudiced city in America."

It is this contrast, this difference in experiences of two of the Greats, that Cousy has reflected on in *The Last Pass*. Could Cousy have changed the way the civil rights movement played out in Boston if he had spoken out against racism? What really passed between him and Russell? Instead of coming off as the voice of Cousy's guilty conscience seeking absolution for his sins, *The Last Pass* gives us a lesson in how an individual can publicly apologize. Bryan Stevenson, executive director of the Equal Justice Initiative and author of *Just Mercy*, says that Cousy demonstrates for us, in his late-life soul-searching, that shame is not a deficiency, but that shame and apology can make a person strong.

Mary Gibbons is a public defender based in Brooklyn who has worked in the criminal justice systems of New Hampshire and New Orleans.



Half-Light
Collected Poems
1965–2016

By Paul Bidart
Farrar, Straus
and Giroux
736p \$40

Tell yourself the truth

Half-Light: Collected Poems 1965–2016 gathers in a single volume of 700-plus pages the poems Frank Bidart has written (often in blood) over the past half-century. Here are Bidart's previous eight volumes plus a new sequence, called, simply, *Thirst*. All of which can be said to be about the self, or—in Yeats's sense—the anti-self refracted through the transfigurative lenses of history and myth.

Half-Light gives us a window into the gay poet who grew up in the cowboy country of Bakersfield, Calif., the only child of parents who eventually divorced and never acknowledged their son's sexuality. Like Frank O'Hara, Bidart is fascinated by the movies he saw as a boy, the only seat of culture available in his town—like 1951's *Pandora and the Flying Dutchman*, with its obsession with love fulfilled (or not) only in death.

Then, too, there are the narratives that read as if Bidart's flesh itself were sewn into them, as in his four *Hours of the Night*, based on the Egyptian god Seti I's "Twelve Hours of the Night," a sequence that will never see completion, any more than Pound's *Cantos* or Williams's *Paterson*. Reading these poems is like reading the Marquis de Sade through the lens of

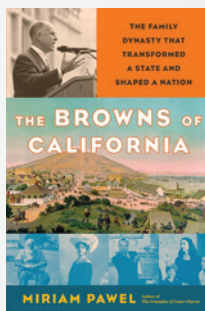
Ignatius Loyola and John of the Cross (or vice versa). Here is a poem Bidart wrote at the age of 73, called, quite simply, “Queer.” “Lie to yourself about this and you will/ forever lie about everything,” he writes.

Bidart tells us he could never hope to find himself except in his poems, and then not even finally there. He knows poetry, knows it incredibly well, and knows—cannily—how white spaces and capital letters and pauses in lineation capture—enflesh—the heart itself. Sometimes his poems verge on a quiet hysteria in the shock of self-revelation. Sometimes he reminds us that his work—like Whitman’s, or Berlioz’s, say—is all part of the song of himself.

Back in the 1970s, a young Bidart transcribed and edited Robert Lowell’s *History Sonnets*, and this immersion finds its way into Bidart’s poems. Then, too, there is Bidart’s need to get down on the page not only his own deep fear of rejection, abandonment and guilt, but the need to confess his love for others. One such work is his now uncoded poem for Joe Brainard, who died of AIDS 25 years ago, which ends:

...the undecipherable
code unbroken even as
the soul
learns once again the body it
loves and hates is
made of earth, and will
betray it.

Paul Mariani, former poetry editor at *America*, is a university professor of English emeritus at Boston College.



The Browns of California

The Family Dynasty That Transformed a State and Shaped a Nation

By Miriam Pawel
Bloomsbury Publishing
496p \$35

To govern is to serve

The late historian Kevin Starr’s five-volume history of California charted the shifting notion of the “dream” of the Golden State, a place where the American future, for better or worse, was continuously reinvented. For Starr, that dream was born during the Gold Rush, as that period’s dynamism, as well as its avarice, situated California on the leading edge of American capitalism, where it remains today.

Miriam Pawel’s masterly, multigenerational history, *The Browns of California*, takes as its subject the political dimensions of the California Dream as embodied by arguably its most prominent political family, which has produced two governors, Pat Brown and his son, Jerry. Instead of symbolizing capitalism, Pawel’s California is instead symbolic of the transformation of American liberalism across the middle decades of the 20th century and across the generational divide between a father and a son.

One of the many strengths of *The Browns of California* is the way Pawel projects the history of California onto the Brown family (including the political careers of Pat and Jerry Brown), lending intimacy and detail to what might have been

a sweeping, superficial narrative in less capable hands.

The Browns played pivotal roles in a startling array of events, from the modernization of the University of California system to the recognition of the United Farm Workers union and the California State Water Project, Pat Brown’s mid-century expansion of the state’s aqueducts that has propelled California’s growth and contributed to its current environmental crisis.

The heart of the book, however, is more personal than political. We learn of Pat Brown, the old-school, Irish-American New Dealer and his son, the former Jesuit seminarian who would build on (and alter) much of his father’s legacy. As Pawel admits, there are many more questions to ask about what was gained, and lost, in this transition from one brand of American liberalism to another. In the meantime, *The Browns of California* will stand as an authoritative guide to a political family and their fascinating, if confounding, home state.

Sean Dempsey, S.J., is an assistant professor of history at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles. He is currently completing a book, *The Politics of Dignity: Religion, Human Rights, and the Making of Global Los Angeles*.



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A profoundly spiritual art exhibit about the abuse crisis

By Jim McDermott

Eight years ago, the Irish-born artist Trina McKillen returned to Dublin to discover that her elderly mother no longer wanted to go to Mass—the ongoing revelations of clerical child abuse were just too much.

“For me, she was the church,” Ms. McKillen told a gathering of over 200 people at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles. “And here she was walking away at the age of 84 from her spiritual home. I felt I had to do something. It’s not right for my mother not to have her refuge.”

What came of that desire to help her mother and others like her is “Confess,” an art exhibit that is having its Los Angeles debut over the next two months at L.M.U.’s Laband Art Gallery. The body of work consists of a series of pieces that evoke the grief and horror that surround the sexual abuse crisis. “Bless Me Child for I Have Sinned” is an exquisitely crafted life-size glass confessional, with a white child’s chair sitting in the place normally occupied by a priest. In “The Children,” 20 altar server garments

and 20 first Communion dresses hang in a small, red-curtained room; in “Stations of Hope,” a darkened space holds 14 framed stations offering a set of faint twinkling lights.

The idea of mounting an exhibition that takes on the crisis of abuse and cover-up in the Catholic Church seems both essential for the Catholic community right now and nearly impossible to render palatable. Ms. McKillen had no illusions her work would be easy. At the exhibit’s opening she described dinner parties where artist friends would “recoil” when she mentioned the work she was doing. She felt “unbelievable anxiety” at the thought of how Catholics might respond.

In retrospect, she did not have to worry. More than anything, what distinguishes this exhibit is its respect and care for the viewer. Instead of rubbing our faces in the horror of what has happened or trying to convey some sort of pedantic message, what Ms. McKillen sets out to offer with “Confess” is a set of contemplative spaces in which people are allowed to get in touch with their

own varied feelings and experiences.

In the central piece of the exhibit, the glass confessional, there are no figures present, neither priest nor child. There is just the hand-carved wooden kneeler on one side, and on the other side a small white chair with a tiny cross sewn into the back and illuminated. With its pure white color and frail, slightly bent legs, the chair evokes vulnerability and innocent, childlike beauty. But that is as far as Ms. McKillen takes it. The rest is up to us to bring, which as it turns out is a tremendous gift; for as much as we have heard and read about the abuse crisis over the years, standing before this empty confessional you come to realize how rarely we have been invited, within or outside the church, to simply be with and process that reality. The emptiness and transparency of the confessional provides a space outside of us, in a sense, in which we can place our feelings and look upon them.

When Ms. McKillen arrived for the opening, she was struck by the sound of the bells from L.M.U.’s chap-



Trina McKillen, "Confess" (Installation view: Lisa Sette Gallery)

The artist Trina McKillen felt "unbelievable anxiety" at the thought of how Catholics might respond to her new exhibit.

el. In Ireland, the bells of the church are always present, she explained to the crowd, whether signaling the Angelus on the radio or echoing outside off the hills. "It's a welcoming sound," she told the gathering, one that says "you're home, you belong."

In the face of the abuse crisis so many of us feel like Ms. McKillen's mother, orphaned and grief-stricken. Paradoxically, by offering people a holy space in which to consider their own feelings of outrage and devastation, "Confess" offers the possibility of something more—a release of sorts and a sense of being on a path, finally, toward home.

"Confess" is on view at L.M.U.'s Laband Art Gallery until March 23. Admission is free. The university is also offering a series of lectures, prayer services and other conversations in conjunction with the exhibit.

Jim McDermott, S.J., is *America's Los Angeles correspondent* and a contributing writer.

Brandi Carlile's biblical imagination

Brandi Carlile's album, "By the Way, I Forgive You," which won three Grammy Awards this year, explores the baggage of broken relationships, the plight of marginalized people, suicidal loneliness, the attractions of fear and the resiliency of the devil. "There are days when I will let the darkness rise," she sings on the track "Harder to Forgive." Carlile offers no formulaic evasions of life's difficulties. This is not to say the record is a downer, only that it yearns for a deeper kind of solace. On this album, forgiveness is a radical act that requires seeing life for what it is, in the hope that honest anguish will find an unforeseen balm.

This acceptance of life's untidiness and struggle echoes ancient biblical sensibilities. In Scripture, those who affirm God's trustworthiness and fidelity in exemplary ways are precisely those who also sing the drama and the trauma of human life. Empires explain and evade; prophets cry and sing. Still, if the masquerade is effective at numbing us to pain, why would we opt for honest anguish? What is there to gain from probing life's wounds?

I think of "By the Way, I Forgive You" as a response to questions like

these. It illuminates pain, especially the pain of those marginalized by exclusionary categories. In the instantly memorable song, "The Joke," Carlile imagines the pain of boys and girls constrained by expectations around gender. The song offers reasons to trust that life does not actually work the way victimizers think it does. It's not a strategy for one-upping an oppressor but a declaration that living by dominating others is ultimately a dead end.

Life will always prove an unwieldy thing to corral with our certitudes. To reject this truth is to diminish the dignity of others as well as the truth of our own lives. Conversely, to accept life as it is means to accept our inevitable failure at the control game—to own up to the cracks in our masks. This is a traumatic admission, no doubt. But what Carlile's album proposes is that these very cracks let us see the light in others and in ourselves, light we might otherwise ignore. To pretend otherwise is not true solace but a joke. Don't fall for it.

Justin Klassen is associate professor of theology at Bellarmine University in Louisville, Ky., and the author of *The Paradox of Hope: Theology and the Problem of Nihilism*.



When Good Things Happen to Bad People

Readings: Ex 3:1-15, Ps 103, 1 Cor 10:1-12, Lk 13:1-9

Catechists, preachers and others who regularly share the word of God know that certain passages of the Gospels can cause significant consternation. The first part of this Sunday's Gospel reading is one such passage. A casual reading reveals Jesus' belief that God does not cause suffering. The Galileans died from Pilate's wrath, not God's, and the Jerusalemites on whom the tower collapsed were victims of misfortune, not objects of divine justice. God did not will these misfortunes to happen; they occurred because, as a once popular book proclaimed, sometimes bad things happen to good people.

Those who read more carefully, however, find much about which to be confused, because Jesus used these examples as calls to repentance. God may not have willed the death of the Galileans, but that does not mean they were without sin. Likewise, God may not have caused the Siloam tower to collapse, but that does not mean the people it crushed were righteous. In fact, Jesus uses the victims of these tragedies as examples of "average" sinners who happened to receive justice by accident. Bad things happened to bad people. The real mystery, given the prevalence of human sinfulness, was why good things happened to bad people so often.

Jesus' response to this question appears in the second half of this Sunday's Gospel reading. In Jesus Christ, humanity has an advocate whose gentle remonstrance can soften the urgency of divine justice. Just as improvement of the soil often leads a barren fig tree to fruitfulness, so, Jesus hoped, the preaching of the Gospel would lead humanity to righteousness. Because of Jesus, a reprieve might yet allow good things to happen.

Luke believed he lived in the era of this reprieve. The risen Christ was working through the Spirit in the church to promote the Gospel and refashion humanity. An essential feature of this work was the call to repentance, a step-by-step process. When people who live the Gospel preached it with words and deeds, others caught sight of a new way of living.

The next, more difficult step was the actual turning away from sinful attitudes and behaviors. In addition to

'But I tell you, if you do not repent, you will all perish as they did!' Lk 13:3

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

What undeserved good things has God given you?

What new vision calls you to repentance?

What can you do this Lent to show that something new has begun in your life?

causing the destruction of self and others, these attitudes and behaviors symbolized an opposition to God's vision. Sorrow for these attitudes and behaviors symbolized a commitment to a new way of life, one that harmed neither self nor others and fulfilled God's dreams for creation.

Cultivating this commitment is the *metanoia*, the "transformation of mind," that so many early Christians described. Although it is a long-term process, it begins with a commitment to change, a desire to conform one's life to this new vision. A life conformed to God's vision is the fruitful fig tree that Jesus hopes for in Sunday's Gospel parable.

Good things happen to bad people because God hopes for their transformation, and this takes time. In this Sunday's Gospel reading, Luke reminds us that in Jesus humanity has received a reprieve from divine justice. In this era of mercy, Christ works in the Spirit with each of us, ever hopeful to see us burst into bloom.

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Freedom and Duty

Readings: Jos 5:9-12, Ps 34, 2 Cor 5:17-21, Lk 15:1-32

Today's Gospel reading contains one of the most beloved passages in the New Testament. The parable traditionally known as the story of the prodigal son appears only in Luke's Gospel. Although Luke may have been working with traditional material, this narrative reveals his brilliance as a writer. In this parable, Luke presents a complex study of the interplay of freedom, duty and love. The younger son embodies freedom. He leaves when he chooses and returns again as he chooses. The elder son, by contrast, embodies duty. He serves his father without complaint and asks for nothing in return. Both sons, however, lack an essential characteristic. Only the father embodies love, and it is in this that freedom and duty achieve their real purpose.

It is easy to identify the younger son as the villain. His request for an early inheritance reveals a breathtaking insolence. He is, in effect, saying that his father is worth more to him dead than alive. His disrespect comes through again as he squanders his family's wealth. His choice to return to his father is also morally threadbare. Although he prepares a fine statement calling himself out as a sinner, one cannot deny that

'This son of mine was dead, and has come to life again; he was lost, and has been found.'
(Lk 15:23-24)



PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

Do you use your freedom to serve others in love?

Does your obedience to God help you love as Jesus did?

How have acts of love helped you understand the true nature of freedom and obedience?

his return has as much to do with food as it does with atonement. He recognizes that he himself has suffered through his actions, but he reveals little understanding of the pain he has caused others. His freedom isolates him, causes him suffering and makes him a source of suffering to others.

The elder son, by contrast, is isolated by his sense of duty. He may have never complained, but he silently feels resentment. His obedience is not a token of his love but rather a manifestation of his own ego. He does what is right not in pursuit of some higher ideal, like righteousness or love, but rather as a way of gaining and holding on to his father's approval. The reappearance of his younger brother reveals the futility of this project when he sees his brother receive on the easiest of terms the validation that he was struggling to achieve. In a way parallel to the younger, the elder's sense of duty isolates him and causes suffering.

Both sons are lost. Both have developed habits that cut them off from others. Only in the father have freedom and duty achieved their final purpose as symbols of love. The father reveals his freedom from attachments and accedes to the younger son's demand. This act of love comes at great material and emotional cost, but he does it without hesitation. When the younger son returns, the father's freedom then allows him to forgive everything and receive the son back.

Likewise, the father's sense of duty is clear when he leaves the celebration to speak with the elder son. Although he no doubt would prefer to stay with the recently returned younger son, he recognizes that the elder needs his love more in that moment. In his promise, "All I have is yours," he acknowledges his debt to the elder, and he offers it all to him as a sign of his love.

Jesus offers this parable to illustrate God's joy at the return of a lost soul. Whenever Christians forget that freedom and duty serve a higher purpose, they run the risk of losing themselves to their own ego. Only those who turn all things toward love will be able to welcome back the lost.

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

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The Iron Nun's Story

Running is a gift I received from God

By Madonna Buder



“What does it feel like to get old?” I was asked this question during a recent conversation with the bishop of Spokane. As an 88-year-old religious sister, I was 30 years his senior and still quite active. While I do not remember my answer to him, it is a question I think about quite often.

As I approach 90, I am less concerned with outward appearances—things like what I wear, how my hair looks, what others think of me—and more concerned with my inner life and how I relate to the world around me. Much of this mindset comes from my dedication to running, which I was introduced to when I was 47 years old by a priest who declared that the sport was a great way to harmonize mind, body and soul. It was an appealing concept, so I laced up my sneakers and hit the pavement.

After an agonizing start, I found that I not only enjoyed running but that I was quite good at it. Three years in, I decided to run in a 14-mile race up Mount Evans in Colorado. Next, I was introduced to triathlons. Eventually, I was encouraged by a running buddy to attempt an Ironman Triathlon, which consists of a 2.4-mile swim, a 112-mile bike ride and a 26.2-mile run, all of which has to be completed within 17 hours.

In 2006, I completed the Hawaii Ironman in just under 17 hours. In 2012, I completed the Subaru Iron-

man in Canada—becoming the oldest woman, at 82, to complete an ironman race. I have completed at least 389 triathlons, including 45 Ironman distances. While running even a short distance feels taxing now, I have a goal to finish another triathlon at 90.

Last year during the USATriathlon National Championships held in Cleveland, there was one man in the 85-plus age group, but he was two years younger than I was. I am still not used to being the oldest person at races. What I do know, however, is that running is a gift I received from God, and when he gives you a gift, you are expected to use it.

When I first took up running, my newfound joy was not supported by the sisters I lived with, who considered this undertaking inappropriate for a nun.

While running out in God's nature, I would find a sense of calm and wellbeing. One day, it struck me that our problems are so minimal compared to the magnificence that surrounds us. The sport has taught me to be grateful for all that God gives us—even the injuries.

In 2014, I had three major accidents within a 16-month period. The second resulted in a torn meniscus. The doctor recommended surgery, but I decided against it, went home and prayed, “God, help me do my best, and you do the rest.” Now I use this

prayer for everything and introduce it to others, especially to those I visit in jail as a volunteer.

From my running to my injuries, I have learned that there are many benefits to aging. Some are obvious: senior discounts on some airlines and at movies and restaurants; government assistance through Social Security and Medicare. However, by far the greatest is the wealth of wisdom acquired through years of experience that can be shared. In European and Asian cultures, seniors are revered. By contrast, in the United States, we are not taught to value the gifts older citizens can provide.

When people ask me for advice on how to cope with aging, two suggestions come to mind. First, remember yourself as a child. Imagine yourself as that little person skipping along without a care in the world. Second, never stop being that child. It will help you be pure, creative and authentic.

I can still remember my mother more than once asking me, “Darling, can't you act your age?” At this point in my life, I am glad the answer was no.

Madonna Buder is a member of the Sisters for Christian Community and a world champion triathlete.



Jesus loves me,
this I know.



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