

# America

MARCH 30, 2020

AND CULTURE

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# America

During this challenging and unprecedented public health crisis, the staff of America Media is praying for the health and well being of all our fellow citizens and for people throughout the world who have been affected by the novel Coronavirus. We invite you to join us:

## A PRAYER AMID A PANDEMIC

Jesus Christ, you traveled through towns and villages “curing every disease and illness.” At your command, the sick were made well. Come to our aid now, in the midst of the global spread of the coronavirus, that we may experience your healing love.

Heal those who are sick with the virus. May they regain their strength and health through quality medical care.

Heal us from our fear, which prevents nations from working together and neighbors from helping one another.

Heal us from our pride, which can make us claim invulnerability to a disease that knows no borders.

Jesus Christ, healer of all, stay by our side in this time of uncertainty and sorrow.

Be with those who have died from the virus. May they be at rest with you in your eternal peace.

Be with the families of those who are sick or have died. As they worry and grieve, defend them from illness and despair. May they know your peace.

Be with the doctors, nurses, researchers and all medical professionals who seek to heal and help those affected and who put themselves at risk in the process. May they know your protection and peace.

Be with the leaders of all nations. Give them the foresight to act with charity and true concern for the well-being of the people they are meant to serve. Give them the wisdom to invest in long-term solutions that will help prepare for or prevent future outbreaks. May they know your peace, as they work together to achieve it on earth.

Whether we are home or abroad, surrounded by many people suffering from this illness or only a few, Jesus Christ, stay with us as we endure and mourn, persist and prepare. In place of our anxiety, give us your peace.

Jesus Christ, heal us.

*Kerry Weber is an executive editor of America.*

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We hope that you can find consolation in America Media’s take and analysis on how the coronavirus is affecting our brothers and sisters around the world. You can easily access up-to-date news and spiritual guidance at our special topics page, [www.americamag.org/coronavirus](http://www.americamag.org/coronavirus).

## Rising Above

I am writing this column from my bedroom in New York on the seventh day of my self-quarantine. Last month I had the honor to co-lead America Media's pilgrimage to the Holy Land with Father James Martin.

It was a grace-filled 10 days, which included trips to Galilee, Nazareth, Jerusalem and Bethlehem. That last excursion, to the place of our Lord's nativity, is the reason for my isolation. The Palestinian authorities put Bethlehem on lockdown the day after our visit. Out of an abundance of caution—to use the now ubiquitous cliché—the four of us from **America's** staff who attended the pilgrimage are now in self-quarantine.

It's a strange sort of thing: I have withdrawn from the community for the sake of the community. It seems counterintuitive, if not absurd, at least in the philosophical sense. So I decided this week to consult the master of the absurd, Albert Camus, and his 1947 novel, *The Plague*, which describes an outbreak of a deadly pestilence in French Algeria.

Camus shows how the various townspeople react to the growing threat in their midst, describing their trajectory from vague indifference to existential crisis as the plague claims more and more of their neighbors.

Father Paneloux, the Jesuit in the novel, does not come off well, at least not at first. The priest is well-respected, but as questions of life and death progress from the conceptual to the terrifyingly real, his philosophical musings and pious platitudes are less and less helpful.

"Paneloux is a man of learning, a scholar," says the more scientifically minded character, Doctor Rieux. "But

every country priest who visits his parishioners and has heard a man gasping for breath on his deathbed thinks as I do. He'd try to relieve human suffering before trying to point out its goodness."

It is a fair point. I've heard variations on it before, often in connection with priests, and Jesuits in particular. We sometimes enjoy the luxury of being aloof—hovering above the real like uninstantiated Platonic forms.

On the other hand, priests and religious are often those who are the most deeply entrenched in the real. The countless men and women who form the outstretched arms and helping hands of the church do not need to be reminded that no one is ultimately spared from the ravages of life. Prick us and we will bleed. Even Father Paneloux discovers that in the end.

As Camus reminds us, a plague presents an existential crisis for each of us. But it also presents an opportunity to learn anew, or for the first time, that our destinies are inextricably intertwined and that it is precisely this reality that calls us into being, that calls us out of darkness and into light.

"What's true of all the evils in the world is true of plague as well," Camus wrote. "It helps men to rise above themselves."

I should tell you, by the way, that I am fine, as are my colleagues. As of this writing, no one who accompanied us on the pilgrimage to the Holy Land has developed symptoms. *Deo Gratias.*

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The following message for our readers was sent from America Media's digital platforms on March 12, 2020. We reproduce it here, for your information:

Due to the public health emer-

gency, the headquarters of America Media in New York will close at 5 p.m., Friday, March 13, and will remain closed for the foreseeable future. All America Media employees will work from home.

There will be no disruption to the production and distribution of the print edition of **America**. Readers and subscribers should expect to receive their print issues according to the usual schedule. Digital coverage will be similarly unaffected.

Four years ago, America Media changed to an all-digital workflow and production process. This allows the editors and staff to prepare the magazine and to send it to the printer from remote locations.

As we continue our work, we also pray for the health and well-being of all our fellow citizens and for people throughout the world who have been affected by this crisis. If you would like to join us, you can find a special prayer on Page 2 of this issue.

For 111 years—through two world wars, the Great Depression, 9/11—**America** magazine has been a witness to our national life. Our experience has taught us this: We can rely on the essential goodness, charity and courage of the American people to meet the challenge of a perilous hour.

Above all, we have faith in the One who ultimately guides our earthly pilgrimage; the One of whom St. Paul wrote in his Letter to the Philippians: "I can do all things through him who strengthens me."

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



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AP Photo/Francisco Seco

Gondoliers wait for customers near St. Mark's square in Venice, Italy, March 3. Venice in the time of coronavirus is a shell of itself.

Cover: Gonzaga's Joel Ayayi plays in the final of the West Coast Conference men's tournament, March 10, in Las Vegas. (AP Photo/John Locher)

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## Does your workplace support your religious practice? How?

I was a public school teacher for 37 years. My junior and senior high students knew that my beliefs informed my opinions. Because I allowed others to express their beliefs, my principals supported my active witness to values and even commended me for that from time to time.

I am now retired; but as an Eastern Orthodox Christian, I never had an issue raised with an icon on my desk, my observing times for prayer or reading Scripture during free time in my daily schedule, as long as I did this privately. We had several Orthodox in my last school, and if we greeted each other with the triple “kiss of peace,” as is our custom on major feasts, this was allowed.

**Earl Bradford**  
Copperhill, Tenn.

At the office we talk about the saints and celebrate their feast days. For example, our office administrator posted a shamrock on each of the support staff’s bulletin boards. We celebrated Fat Tuesday. For those who didn’t know what it was, it was explained to them. There were conversations among the office staff about the sacrifices we were going to make during Lent. We speak of God’s blessings. We share

our spiritual journeys. I pray a lot and often. I find ways to evangelize during conversations with coworkers. I share stories of my childhood that exemplify the faith enriched environment that my parents created.

**Leslie Tylus**  
West New York, N.J.

My workplace hasn’t been explicit on whether we can or can’t practice a religion. I do have a print of Our Lady of Guadalupe on display in my office. No one has told me to take it down—yet.

**Pamela Morales**  
McAllen, Tex.

I am able to schedule my lunch time so I can go to Mass. I am also able to take days off with pay for my annual retreat. It is categorized the same as for those military reserves who are required to put in their two-week annual duty. The other employees know that I go to Mass and often ask me to say a prayer for them when they see me leave.

**Gloria List**  
Milwaukee, Wis.

## Letters to the Editor

I resonated with the “Of Many Things” column by Matt Malone S.J., on magnanimity. It reminded me of a variation on the theme in the recent biography of Hubert H. Humphrey by Arnold A. Offner, subtitled *The Conscience of the Country*. The book is a fine portrayal of this already mostly forgotten politician, whose idealistic (not ideological) values and personal qualities seem quaint in our current era of scorched-earth politics.

The author recounts a story (it could be titled “The Lost Art of Grace in Politics”) about Humphrey’s act of forgiveness just before his death in 1977. He left specific instructions about a person he wanted invited to his lying-in-state ceremony at the Capitol rotunda. He then made a telephone call to Richard Nixon on Christmas Eve—the same opponent who had terribly wronged Humphrey and the electorate of the nation in the campaign with lies and

misconduct in order to defeat Humphrey for the presidency in 1968. Shortly thereafter, Humphrey died, and to the dismay and astonishment of the nation’s governing class, who had assembled at the formal Capitol ceremony, Nixon appeared.

As per the instructions, Nixon was given a place of honor and respect. This was his first time back in Washington since his departure in disgrace. Humphrey closed his public life as he had lived it, with class, grace and respect for the office to which he heartily yearned to ascend but never attained, in part because of Nixon’s dirty campaign tricks. Humphrey thus transcended the dark pettiness of his time that is more deeply evident in today’s badly evolved politics.

**Joseph W. Bellacosa (Retired Judge, New York State Court of Appeals)**  
Ridgefield, Conn.

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## How Catholics Should Respond to the Coronavirus

As of this writing, the new coronavirus illness, known as Covid-19, has spread to at least 117 countries, infected nearly 125,000 people and killed over 4,600 people worldwide. Even as the spread of the virus has slowed in China, the center of the outbreak, cases are cropping up in communities across the United States, where 41 people have died thus far. This includes cases with no connection to foreign travel, suggesting the virus has been spreading undetected for longer than first estimated. The coronavirus poses a public risk; no individual or country is immune from infection. As such, it requires a proactive, public response centered on the common good.

This response has both individual and structural elements. On the individual level, each person must decide how best to protect his or her own health without jeopardizing the well-being of neighbors. This means neither over- nor underreacting. Hoarding goods, especially face masks and hand sanitizer, may provide healthy individuals with the illusion of safety, but it does so by potentially putting health care workers and other caregivers at greater risk if they are unable to access these needed supplies.

On the other hand, not taking appropriate precautions can also hurt high-risk populations. While Covid-19 is not life-threatening to the vast majority of people (according to one U.S. expert, 80 percent of cases are mild, and patients “spontaneously recover”), for the elderly and people with certain underlying medical conditions the mortality rate could be as high as 15 percent. Otherwise healthy indi-

viduals who are tempted to ignore guidelines for hygiene practices, social distancing or voluntary quarantine orders must realize that what might feel like the common cold to them could pose a serious threat to their neighbors. They should act accordingly.

Just as some people are at a higher physical risk from the virus, many Americans are more vulnerable to the economic effects of the outbreak. They include the one-third of workers—and two-thirds of low-wage earners—who do not have paid sick leave. Many of these people work in the service sector—restaurants, hotels, retail, home care—where they are regularly in contact with the public. Enabling a sick employee to take time off to get medical care without losing a job or being unable to pay rent is not only a matter of justice and solidarity with that employee—it is also a proactive defense of public health for the entire community.

The outbreak could also exacerbate well-known cracks in the U.S. health care system. The 27 million people in the United States without health insurance and millions more with high-deductible plans may forgo a trip to the doctor for fear of leaving with an exorbitant bill. The \$8.3 billion bipartisan emergency response bill passed by the House on March 4 will bring much-needed resources and relief to federal agencies and state governments working to contain the spread of Covid-19 and develop a vaccine. But stopgap measures are no replacement for well-funded, fully staffed health agencies and a health care system that incentivizes proactive detection and treatment for diseases that threaten the nation’s health and economy.

As urgent as such longer-term

structural reforms are, for now the primary response to the coronavirus outbreak will come at the state, community and individual levels. Dioceses throughout the United States have adopted a wide-range of measures to curb the spread of coronavirus, including no longer exchanging the sign of peace, receiving Communion on the hand and not offering the chalice. Other dioceses are dispensing Catholics from their Sunday obligation, with some canceling Masses. Just as our Lenten penance is meant to deepen our relationship with God and our solidarity with all who suffer as the Lord did, we can allow these sacrifices and inconveniences in our daily lives to direct our prayers toward those who have died and their loved ones, our attention toward those who are ill or facing financial hardship and our actions toward strengthening the common good, both at home and abroad. The coronavirus poses a threat that knows no borders. As Catholics, neither does our love and concern for our neighbors.

### Welcoming New Catholics

On Holy Saturday, thousands of catechumens and candidates in the United States will join the Catholic Church. The Easter Vigil is the “mother of all vigils,” according to the Roman Missal, and is the “greatest and most noble of all solemnities, and it is to be unique in every single church.” Every year, new members around the world are initiated into the church as it celebrates the triumph of Jesus Christ over sin and death. Catechumens are baptized, confirmed and receive first Communion. Candidates who were previously baptized in another



Christian tradition become full members of the Catholic Church through a profession of faith and are also confirmed and receive first Communion.

This is a joyful occasion, and we do not wish to dampen spirits with cold numbers. So please forgive the reminder that Catholics make up a dwindling percentage of Americans—from 23 percent in 2009 to 20 percent in 2019, according to one national survey. Weekly Mass attendance also continues to fall, from an estimated 24 percent of Catholics in 2015 to 21 percent in 2018. In fact, the number of adults who are joining the church in the United States each year has steadily declined since 2000, dropping below 100,000 for the first time in 2017. Some have speculated that the decline could be attributed to the dropping number of Catholic marriages, especially marriages between Catholics and non-Catholics.

Despite these challenges, the overall number of Catholics in the United States continues to increase, now reaching more than 76 million. And those who enter the church as adults during the Easter Vigil are much more likely to stay Catholic. During that unique liturgical ceremony, the church dramatically draws attention to Christ as the light of the world, a sign of hope in dark times. Our new Catholics, too, are signs of hope. May they inspire all of us to share our faith and live it more deeply for years to come.

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## For Lent, let's give up a treat that exploits child labor

As Pope Francis has reminded us, “purchasing is always a moral—and not simply economic—act.” Communities of faith have appropriately been instrumental in making trade and commerce more fair. Efforts to respect the dignity of workers in the apparel industry, for example, include support for Fair Trade certification of brands with sustainable wages and safer working conditions, international monitoring organizations like the Workers Rights Consortium and living-wage apparel factories like Alta Gracia, in the Dominican Republic.

There is another important product that gets far less attention: chocolate. As someone who does research on the environmental impact of purchases and also has an unhealthy chocolate addiction, I am giving up chocolate this Lent, and I will commit to child-labor-free chocolate for the rest of the year to protest the suffering of those who make this product.

The 2010 documentary “The Dark Side of Chocolate” shows how children from African nations are enticed to Ghana and the Ivory Coast to work in cocoa production but, once there, receive brutal treatment. While progress has been made since the documentary’s release, only 12 percent of cocoa farmers today earn the \$2.50 per day necessary for a living income. Because farm incomes are so low, farmers cannot afford to pay much to their workers, which has made child labor difficult to eradicate.

Much of the public remains unaware of child labor in cocoa farming, which involves spraying pesticides, cutting cocoa pods off tree stems with a machete and hauling bags that may weigh 100 pounds. An estimated 2.1 million children still work on cocoa

farms in the Ivory Coast and Ghana. While child “trafficking,” or the enticement of underage workers from other countries, is now a very small part of cocoa production, children still help on family farms, often missing school to do so. Because they are spending their childhood harvesting cocoa, they are more likely to remain trapped in poverty.

Change within the industry’s largest brands has made a difference. Hershey’s, Mars and Nestlé are making laudable progress toward eradicating child labor and trafficking in chocolate’s supply chain as part of a voluntary commitment in 2001, yet none of these companies guarantee that their chocolate is child-labor-free, and they are unlikely to meet their 2020 goal of a 70 percent reduction in child labor.

But a recent price increase may help the industry move away from child labor. A chocolate cartel in Ghana and the Ivory Coast, which collectively produces over 60 percent of the world’s chocolate, will add a \$400-per-metric-ton premium to cocoa. This equates to a 16 percent jump in chocolate prices or an additional 5 cents per chocolate bar. Government officials say that boosting farmer incomes will decrease the use of child labor, but it is not yet clear that will happen, especially if a lack of schools keeps children on farms. It is also possible that the price increase will simply facilitate clearing land for more cocoa production.

Even if industry-wide change lags, consumers are leaping ahead. Supermarkets now feature socially just and environmentally sustainable options, indicated by the labels Fair Trade, Fair Trade USA, USDA Organic, and Fair for Life. Consumers who purchase

these items pay a premium, but the market for fair trade and environmentally sourced chocolate is growing.

The most expensive chocolate may be out of reach for most families, but consumers can encourage larger brands to continue their progress toward child-labor-free chocolate. A report from three agricultural economists in the United States suggests increasing the cost of cocoa by 2.8 percent (going from \$1.79 to \$1.84 for a Hershey bar) “could provide farmers with enough income to hire qualified adult labor, instead of relying on children.”

Equally encouraging is the increased visibility of efforts to give up products that perpetuate social injustices. In her new book, Lauren Bravo writes about how she broke up with the “exploitive and wasteful” apparel industry, resolving to buy no new clothing for a year. The theologian Liz Lwanga recently wrote about clothing purchases as a social justice issue for Christians. These efforts to “fast from indifference” inspire.

For me, my almost daily chocolate consumption will provide ample opportunities for reflection on how to be in the right relationship with those who make the things I buy. My action stems, in part, from friendship with a former child garment worker and a commitment to both individual and collective action. I invite others to join me by reflecting on purchasing as a moral act and an opportunity to promote social justice.

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*Christie Klimas is an associate professor of environmental science and studies at DePaul University.*

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## The church in Africa and around the world joins efforts to combat coronavirus

By Shola Lawa

During his Angelus address on March 8, Pope Francis prayed for people falling ill to the coronavirus, saying that he and his bishops ask “the faithful to live this difficult moment with the strength of the faith, the certainty of hope and the ardor of charity.” The Vatican confirmed its first case of Covid-19 in March as new cases of coronavirus were reported across the United States.

As cities and nations across the globe responded to the quickly rising numbers of people infected with the coronavirus, a particular concern has been the impact of the epidemic in Africa. As in dioceses in the United States and Europe, Catholic Church authorities in Lagos State announced that handshakes or greetings of the peace and other personal contact at Mass had been suspended, amid growing fears that the virus might be spreading in Nigeria, a regional economic hub and Africa’s most populous nation.

The announcement came soon after Lagos State confirmed its first case of the respiratory virus. The timing was not good. The Lenten season is underway, and more Nigeri-

ans are likely to attend religious gatherings. Just under half the nation’s 214 million people are Christian, and about 20 million—11 percent of the population—are Catholic.

To forestall a possible outbreak, Archbishop Alfred Martins of the Archdiocese of Lagos said contact at Mass should be restricted: Holy Communion must be received on the palm, rather than on the tongue, and priests across the state were told to halt the sprinkling of holy water.

“We have to take proactive steps to protect ourselves from infection,” Archbishop Martins said in a statement on Feb. 29. “To reduce the number of gatherings in church to the barest necessary, we encourage people to do Stations of the Cross privately on Wednesdays, while public celebrations will take place only on Fridays.”

Nigeria is the first country in sub-Saharan Africa to confirm a case of the novel coronavirus, known as SARS-CoV-2, which causes Covid-19. On Feb. 27, an Italian man working for a cement company in Nigeria tested positive for the virus, Nigeria’s health ministry said, dashing hopes

Preparing for patients of Covid-19 at the Yaba Mainland hospital in Lagos, Nigeria.

that coronavirus could be kept out of a region where health services are already stretched thin because of malaria and other serious illnesses.

An outbreak in Lagos, a city of 20 million, would be devastating, health experts here say. Health workers in Nigeria have had their plates full already combating Lassa fever, a viral hemorrhagic illness that is contracted through exposure to rodent droppings. The Lassa virus, endemic in West Africa, has killed some 132 people in Nigeria since an outbreak in January that has spread to 11 states.

Covid-19, which originated in Wuhan, China, was declared a pandemic on March 11 by officials at the World Health Organization after it had been confirmed in 116 countries. By March 16 more than 169,000 people had fallen ill, and more than 6,500 had died. More than 3,700 cases have been reported in the United States, with 69 deaths so far.

By reversing course and declaring a pandemic, a word that W.H.O. officials had previously shied away from, the United Nations health agency appeared to want to shock lethargic countries into more aggressive efforts to slow the spread of the disease. In the United States

the Trump administration has been criticized for its lackluster response to the quickly escalating crisis.

“We have called every day for countries to take urgent and aggressive action. We have rung the alarm bell loud and clear,” said Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the W.H.O. chief.

“All countries can still change the course of this pandemic, if countries detect, test, treat, isolate, trace and mobilize their people in the response,” he added. “We are deeply concerned by the alarming levels of spread and severity and by the alarming levels of inaction.”

As the numbers of newly infected people declined dramatically in China, where the coronavirus was first detected in December, W.H.O. officials said that Iran and Italy were the new front lines in the battle.

“They’re suffering, but I guarantee you other countries will be in that situation soon,” said Dr. Mike Ryan, the W.H.O.’s emergencies chief.

The coronavirus case in Lagos was confirmed just two

days after the Nigeria Center for Disease Control and other health agencies conducted training with health teams from all over Africa on handling the disease. As the news broke in Lagos, where people spend commuting hours in extremely close quarters, hundreds flooded stores to purchase hand sanitizers and masks. Stocks sold out in markets across the city even as prices doubled.

Nigerian authorities, who had long anticipated that cases might arrive from China, were blindsided by the case from Italy, now the center of coronavirus in Europe. Nigerian legislators, trying to stop the virus from entering the country, had voted down motions to repatriate Nigerian citizens now stranded in China, and health workers had been rigorously screening passengers arriving on flights from Wuhan.

The W.H.O. listed 13 African countries, including Nigeria, as high-priority states because of the large volume of travel to and from China—Africa’s biggest trading partner. More than 300 cases of Covid-19 have been confirmed on the continent so far.

While there is still limited testing capacity in Africa, W.H.O. officials said it has helped to increase the number of countries that can test for potential cases to 26 from just two in January. Senegal, which confirmed a second case early on March 4, is well positioned to manage the virus because of the presence of its leading biomedical research center, Institut Pasteur de Dakar. Africa C.D.C. is working with health teams from around the continent, training them and distributing test kits to help with detecting the coronavirus.

Those countries without the capacity to test for the virus are keen to prevent the disease from breaching their borders. Tanzanian officials said 2,000 trained health officials and a number of isolation facilities are on standby. And Uganda, battle-tested by its efforts to contain the Ebola pandemic in the neighboring Democratic Republic of Congo, increased airport surveillance and testing.

Rwandair, South Africa Airways, Egypt Air and Morocco’s Royal Air have suspended flights to China altogether. But Ethiopia Airlines, which shuttles about 1,500 people between the capital, Addis Ababa and China, has continued to operate despite criticism and pressure from Ethiopia’s neighbors to suspend flights.

“Our worry as a country is not that China cannot manage the disease,” Kenya’s President Uhuru Kenyatta said,

An Italian citizen who became the first case of the Covid-19 in Nigeria is being treated at the Yaba Mainland hospital in Lagos.



reacting to the airline’s announcement to keep flying to China. “Our biggest worry is diseases coming into areas with weaker health systems like ours.”

Still, experts say some African countries, particularly Nigeria, are well-equipped to deal with viral outbreaks. When Ebola struck West Africa in 2014 and killed thousands in neighboring Liberia and Sierra Leone, Nigeria’s health officials sprang into action, doggedly tracking and isolating exposed persons. The virus was squashed in three months and mortality was mercifully low. The country’s health officials are confident that the Ebola crisis provided enough experience to enable its teams to manage a coronavirus outbreak.

“Africa has learned from the last Ebola outbreak,” said Dr. Abimbola Bowale, the medical director of the Mainland Infectious Diseases Hospital Yaba, where the Italian patient is now quarantined.

Betty Nicholas, a 26-year-old Lagos resident, said the church is also falling back on emergency measures established during the Ebola outbreak. Ms. Nicholas, who attends St. Gerald Church in Gbagada, a Lagos suburb, said it has been easy to fall back into the preventative routines used to contain Ebola: utilizing sanitizer dispensers that

have reappeared at the church’s doorways, listening attentively to safety tips offered between sermons and avoiding contact with other parishioners.

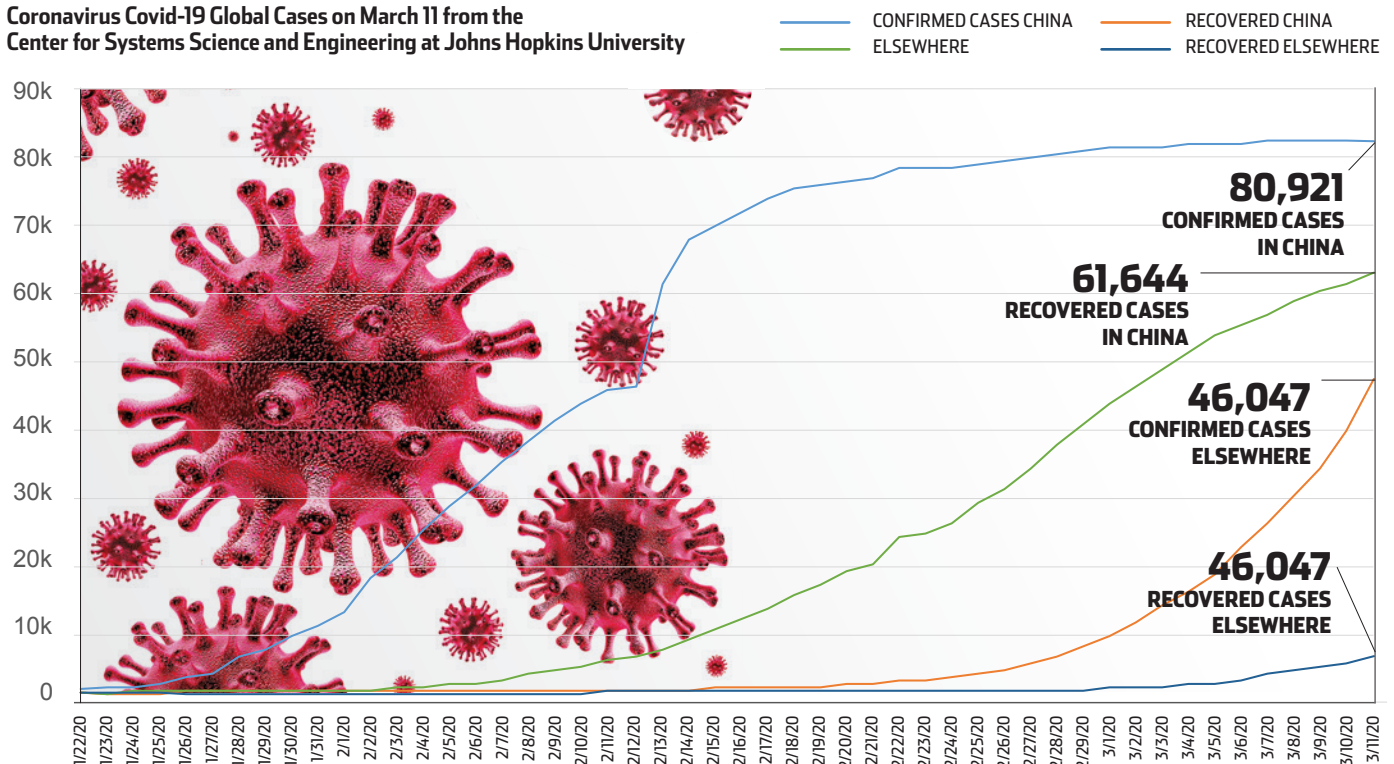
“We now just put our hands together and bow rather than hug each other. And when we meet for church gatherings and meetings, they’re less crowded and as short as possible.”

Ms. Nicholas said the measures are reducing panic levels, but many are choosing not to take any chances.

“The last service was not as full,” she added. “Some people came wearing full face masks and gloves.”

Shola Lawal, a Lagos-based journalist. Twitter: @Shollytupe. With reporting from Catholic News Service and The Associated Press.

Coronavirus Covid-19 Global Cases on March 11 from the Center for Systems Science and Engineering at Johns Hopkins University



Sources: Graph courtesy of the Coronavirus Resource Center, Johns Hopkins Center for Systems Science and Engineering. Copyright held by Johns Hopkins University.



## Iraq's Christians struggle as power of Iran-backed militias is on the rise

A street scene in Bartella, Iraq

With the liberation of northern Iraq from ISIS in 2017, Iraq's Syriac and Chaldean Christians returned home to two unwelcome developments. First, unsurprisingly, their homes had been looted or destroyed by ISIS. Second, Iran-backed groups—known as Popular Mobilization Forces—who helped defeat ISIS now controlled the towns the Christians' ancestors had inhabited for more than a millennia.

Today, the largest Christian town, Baghdeda, is surrounded by an Iran-funded militia. The second-largest town, Bartella, is controlled by another such militia. A demographic shift also is taking place in these communities. Once largely Syriac Christian, they are now Shabak Muslim. The Shabak are primarily a Shiite minority who, like Christians and Yazidis, were persecuted by ISIS.

As recently as 2003, Bartella was 95 percent Christian. In the space of a decade, it has become majority Shabak, and members of this religious and ethnic community now control the town's government and checkpoints into the city through their wing of the P.M.F., the Shabak Militia. Today, this militia receives arms, vehicles and money from Iran.

Amjad, 33, a Syriac worker in an electricity shop, complained of treatment as a second-class citizen by this militia. "Frankly speaking, if they had the chance, they'd take everything from us," he said. "If they have the chance to attack, they'd do more damage than ISIS did." (Pseudonyms have been used for most of the people interviewed for this article to protect them from reprisals.)

Christian business owners are targeted by the P.M.F., who demand bribes for allowing goods through at checkpoints or for opening a shop. "At the checkpoint toward Erbil, which they control, they don't let some cars go through without a bribe of \$1,000," said Amjad.

Although the same pattern of harassment and discrimination that began in 2017 continues in Bartella, locals

disagree on the impact of rising U.S.-Iran tensions. Some believe that Christians face more scrutiny at Shabak-controlled checkpoints. Others think the militias, rattled by the assassination of Iranian commander Qassim Soleimani and anti-Iran protests in Baghdad, have dialed back the worst of their behavior.

The Most Rev. Petros Mouche, the Syriac Catholic archbishop of Mosul, said that "the tensions between Iran and the U.S. haven't changed anything for now, but that doesn't mean the situation is good."

"As long as the presence and influence of Iran remain in Iraq and especially in the Nineveh Plains, there is a risk of more problems and difficulties in co-existing peacefully with our neighbors," he said.

The recent disappearance of four employees of the Catholic aid group SOS Chrétiens d'Orient in Baghdad on Jan. 20 only added to Christian anxiety in the north. One employee was a Syriac Catholic, who may be the first Christian from Baghdeda to have been taken by an Islamist group since 2017. The remaining three were French nationals. SOS Chrétiens d'Orient has organized a prayer campaign for their safe return.

The most direct consequence of rising insecurity is practical: emigration. Large numbers of Christians who returned after ISIS was driven off have decided to abandon the effort to re-establish themselves in the communities of the Nineveh Plains. This problem is especially pronounced in Baghdeda. Although the economy is poor, emigrants overwhelmingly say it is the poor security and sectarian tensions that are driving them out of Nineveh.

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Xavier Bisits writes from Washington, D.C.  
Twitter: @XavierBisits. With Rami Esa Saqat  
and Fadi Esa Saqat reporting from Iraq.



# Fear haunts Mexico's monarch butterfly reserve after activists' murder

Homero Gómez trod carefully along a muddy path on a mountain slope in the central Mexican state of Michoacán. The silence amid the surrounding pine trees was broken only by the faint rustle of thousands of tiny orange butterflies.

"It's a sunny day today, so the butterflies will come down from the trees to look for water," Mr. Gómez said, as he barely sidestepped a small, wet spot on the path filled with the insects. "They almost form a sort of tapestry on the floor. If you don't watch out, you can step on a dozen of them."

The yearly mass migration of millions of monarch butterflies is an extraordinary sight that attracts thousands of visitors each year to the El Rosario section of the Monarch Butterfly Biosphere Reserve. The monarchs travel thousands of miles from Canada and the United States to just a handful of mountain tops here in Michoacán, some 150 miles west of Mexico City.

The butterflies mean tourism and jobs to the local community. "The butterflies are everything to us," Mr. Gómez, 19, said. "Our ancestors thought they represented the returning souls of the dead."

But a shadow hangs over the community. On Feb. 1, the body of Mr. Gómez's father, Homero Gómez González, was found in a well not far from the reserve. He had disappeared two weeks earlier after attending a religious festival in a nearby community.

Even before El Rosario could come to terms with that loss, Raúl Hernández, a tourist guide from another nearby reserve, was also found dead. Authorities found stab wounds on his body.

Both murders came as a huge shock for El Rosario, an *ejido*, or communal land, worked by residents who share resources and profits. Mr. Gómez González had been a life-long advocate for butterfly preservation. He gained fame in Mexico and beyond because of his passionate defense of the region's natural resources to ensure the butterflies' continued existence.

That existence has increasingly come under pressure. Changing climate patterns threaten to make the insects' migration to Mexico more difficult, as does the widespread disappearance of milkweed—a crucial source of food for the butterflies en route to Mexico—driven by the overuse of herbicides in the United States.

Mr. Gómez González became most famous for his campaigns to combat illegal logging in El Rosario, one of four parcels that comprise the Monarch Butterfly Biosphere Reserve. He endured frequent threats from local politicians and criminals who backed illegal loggers.

Michoacán authorities initially said Mr. Gómez González's death was the result of an accident. An autopsy, however, revealed blunt head trauma, strongly suggesting





Jan-Albert Hootsen

Following, carefully, in his father's footsteps—Homero Gómez in El Rosario

he may have been murdered. In a country already mired in bloodshed fueled by organized crime, environmentalists are among the hardest hit of all rights defenders. In 2018 alone, 21 were killed.

In Michoacán, few are willing to speak openly about the challenges of defending the environment in a state where organized crime has terrorized the civilian population for years, and where gangs have battled each other and the state for control over drug trafficking and other illegal trades. With almost 1,500 murders, 2019 was the most violent year in the state's modern history.

"There are a lot of risks involved in doing what my father did, but no one else had the capacity for community organization that he had," said the younger Mr. Gómez. "I want to learn how to do the same thing, although it'll be difficult. My dad knew everything, I just barely started learning about the forest and the butterflies a few years ago."

He sighed. "It's a big responsibility. There's only one El Rosario."

Jan-Albert Hootsen, *Mexico City correspondent.*  
Twitter: @jahootsen.



Students march for climate justice at Creighton on Feb. 20.

## GOODNEWS: Student activists push fossil fuel divestment at Creighton

In response to sustained pressure from student climate activists and faculty members, Creighton University, a Jesuit institution in Omaha, announced on Feb. 18 that it would reduce its "investment exposure to fossil fuel companies" to 5.7 percent of its investment portfolio—a decrease of 3.2 percentage points. In a statement to the university community, Daniel S. Hendrickson, S.J., president of Creighton, said that the board of trustees will consider different divestment plans while committing the university to investments in sustainability efforts.

The university intends to "improve [its] portfolio's environmental, social, and governance score over time," as well as to continue "to engage with peer universities and colleges to better understand investment assessment practices across similar institutions."

The C.U. Climate Movement sponsored a "march to the boardroom" on Feb. 20 to protest the university's fossil fuel investments. According to Emily Burke, a senior at Creighton active in the climate movement, the march was attended by about 200 students.

Last November, 86 percent of voting students—2,438 in total—supported a nonbinding referendum that urged university trustees to sell off the 10.6 percent of the university endowment that was invested in fossil fuel corporations by 2025. Divestment advocacy at Creighton kicked off in April 2018, when over 200 students rallied to urge action on climate change.

Creighton is not alone in undertaking divestment efforts. In February, Georgetown University adopted a similar strategy, and in September 2018, the board of trustees at Seattle University voted to divest completely by 2023. Fossil Free, a climate justice movement, tracks 379 divestment campaigns, including efforts at Fordham University and Loyola University New Orleans.

Ryan Di Corpo, *Joseph A. O'Hare, S.J., fellow.*

# THE GAME



Zion Williamson (1) of Duke University goes up to dunk against Syracuse during an N.C.A.A. college basketball game in Charlotte, N.C., on March 14, 2019.



AP Photo/Chuck Burton

## What does Catholic social teaching say about what a college owes its athletes?

By Kevin Jackson

You might have to read it more than once before it really hits you, but there it is, right in the introduction, a word that does not seem to belong: *neoplantation*.

It is in a 1997 book, *Unsportsmanlike Conduct: Exploiting College Athletes*, written by the late Walter Byers, about college sports and the National Collegiate Athletic Association. In this particular passage, Byers is talking about the N.C.A.A. Presidents' Commission, a former governing body of the organization.

"Today, the NCAA Presidents' Commission is...firmly committed to the neoplantation belief that the enormous proceeds from college games belong to the overseers (the administrators) and supervisors (coaches)," Byers writes. "The plantation workers in the arena may receive only those benefits authorized by the overseers. This system is so biased against human nature and simple fairness in light of today's high-dollar, commercialized college marketplace."

"Neoplantation" is hyphenated from page 2 to page 3, and in the moment it takes your eyes to move from the bottom of one page to the top of the next, you wonder—is he really going to make that comparison? He does, and it might be the most surprising clue to the ongoing turmoil within the N.C.A.A.

Why? Byers ran the association, serving as its first executive director for 36 years.

Whether or not the slavery metaphor is extreme, Byers identifies a sentiment that has continued to grow since he wrote his book in 1997: College athletes deserve more money for their efforts. More specifically, athletes who play football and men's basketball at large institutions often generate a huge profit for their universities. That money, of course, helps to fund other sports programs at a uni-

# A changing legal landscape in college sports has renewed the discussion of what is 'fair' for college athletes in terms of their compensation.

versity. But it far exceeds what the football and basketball athletes receive in return—usually some combination of a scholarship, equipment and media exposure.

A changing legal landscape in college sports has renewed the discussion of what is “fair” for college athletes when it comes to compensation. In September 2019, a law passed in California opened new doors for college athletes to profit from the use of their name, image and likeness, and other states are considering similar legislation. By the N.C.A.A.’s own admission, it will have to make some changes very soon to ensure compliance with this law, though the extent of those changes remains to be seen.

But perhaps, in the midst of this debate, the Catholic tradition can offer a framework for moving forward. During his papacy, Pope St. John Paul II spoke to many groups of athletes—an Argentine national soccer team, Italian mountain climbers, waterskiers from all over the world—and often returned to the same theme. “Sport is at the service of man, and not man at the service of sport,” he said in a 1990 address.

How could that simple insight shape the debate about compensation for college athletes? Maybe, if developed, a Catholic perspective would find a balance between the basic good of athletic competition and the financial opportunities of college sports as entertainment. Maybe this perspective can help place a concern for the whole human person at the center of the conversation.

## LANGUAGE BARRIER

“The issue now is that you have to define what’s acceptable and what isn’t acceptable,” said John Wildhack, director of athletics at Syracuse University. “There needs to be a framework which applies at a national level and says, ‘Here are ways where [profiting off name, image and likeness] is appropriate and here are ways where it’s not appropriate,’” he said.

What is “appropriate” and “not appropriate” depends on whom you ask. Jordan Schmid, a junior midfielder on the Marquette University men’s lacrosse team, has some concerns about the proper way to move forward, particularly when considering anything that treats college athletes as employees.

Mr. Schmid is the president of Marquette’s Stu-

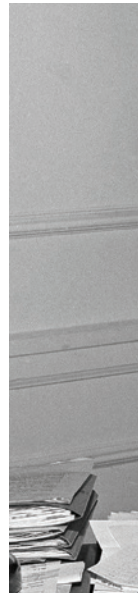
dent-Athlete Advisory Committee, a liaison group between athletes and administration that exists at all N.C.A.A. member schools. (He emphasized that these opinions are his own and that he does not presume to speak for his fellow athletes at Marquette.)

“If you look at regular students, they’re able to use their name for whatever it’s worth,” he said. “That’s awesome, and I think student-athletes should have that opportunity... But I think the rules around it have to be very strict. What makes me nervous is, say, Zion Williamson [the first pick in the 2019 N.B.A. draft] signs a deal with Nike for a million dollars in high school, and then Nike tells him ‘you have to go to this university because it’s better for us for marketing.’”

He said that Marquette’s S.A.A.C. continues to have conversations about the best way to proceed, and he knows that the administrators are committed to hearing what students have to say. “At the end of the day, college athletics is about playing the sport you love and getting a great education at the same time,” Mr. Schmid said.

But some people understand the relationship between athlete and university as more transactional. One such person is Domonique Foxworth. Mr. Foxworth, 36, has experienced sports from just about every possible angle. He played football as a defensive back for the University of Maryland, spent six years playing in the N.F.L., served as president of the N.F.L. Players’ Association, graduated from Harvard Business School and now plays a number of different roles at ESPN.

The new California legislation does not give Mr. Foxworth much hope; it proposes surface-level changes in a system he thinks is fundamentally flawed. He says it adds an extra step for an athlete looking to make some money off his or her ability.





Walter Byers, first executive director of the N.C.A.A., at his desk in 1961. Byers ran the organization for 36 years.

“[The California law] still doesn’t require the N.C.A.A. to pay for athletes’ labor,” said Mr. Foxworth. So, as an athlete, “you have to go around and shop for places who want to use your likeness. Rather than paying them for the labor, [the N.C.A.A.] has basically told athletes that they have to go get another job.”

Another complicating factor is the way money currently moves within athletic departments. Most of them function by siphoning money from the larger, revenue-generating sports into sports programs that make no money.

“It’s kind of insulting that the expectation is for the big two revenue-producing sports to work to support the other sports,” said Mr. Foxworth. “Those sports are great. I hope they continue to exist. But it’s not the responsibility of football and basketball players to work for free so that they can exist.”

Mr. Schmid talks about the importance of a great education and having fun, and Mr. Foxworth talks about athletes as a labor force. Are they disagreeing? Not exactly. It is more like the two are speaking different languages. A term like *labor* is not in the vocabulary of the N.C.A.A., which insists that college athletes are not employees.

Getting everyone on the same page means first attempting to understand the history of a term that defines the N.C.A.A.’s entire system: *amateurism*.

## A TARNISHED IDEAL

The N.C.A.A. was founded in 1906, by which time college athletics—and its most popular sport, football—had already endured a surprisingly tumultuous history.

In 1869, college football’s first game ended with Rutgers beating New Jersey (soon to be known as Princeton) 6 to 4.

In the decades that followed, the sport became immensely popular, with Ivy League schools like Princeton, Yale and Penn consistently fielding some of the best teams in the country. A young man by the name of Walter Camp, after playing at Yale in the late 1870s, returned to coach at his alma mater and became known as the Father of American Football for his countless innovations

in the game, including the line of scrimmage, the number of downs allowed and a limit of 11 players on the field for each team (it had previously been 15).

It is tempting to look back at this time as a more innocent age, but even then, corruption posed serious threats to the future of the game. Many coaches at top football programs would persuade players to enroll at the school ahead of a big game, and they would leave afterwards, sometimes playing for a different team the following week. Mr. Camp himself reportedly maintained an alumni-funded \$100,000 slush fund—equivalent to nearly \$3 million today—and used this secret pool of money to provide benefits to athletes who played for him.

A muckraker journalist named Henry Beach Needham brought many of these unsettling trends to the public eye, and he saw a link among them: a win-at-all-costs mentality. In an article that appeared in McClure’s magazine in 1905, Mr. Needham asked, “Who can blame the college man for harboring a desire to win? No one. But it is more than that. To win at any cost—that is the source of the present deplorable condition of intercollegiate athletics.”

So when President Theodore Roosevelt created the N.C.A.A. in the early 20th century, the ideal upon which the organization was founded was already tarnished: that the amateur athlete is motivated purely by a love of their sport.

The N.C.A.A. also did not accomplish much in the way of enforcing this ideal during the first 45 years of its history. A comprehensive report from the Carnegie Foundation in 1929 on the state of college athletics explained the numerous ways schools’ recruiting tactics were in blatant violation of toothless N.C.A.A. guidelines. Money was nearly always involved in recruiting; “One seldom exists without

the other,” said the report. Of 112 schools in the study, 72 percent of them provided some form of subsidies to prospective athletes.

Things changed for the N.C.A.A. in 1951, when a 29-year-old college dropout named Walter Byers took over the organization. He convinced N.C.A.A. member schools to accept sanctions imposed by the organization for violations. Whereas previously the association could only penalize schools with the full support of all the member institutions, it now began to act with some authority.

Over the next few decades, the N.C.A.A. cracked down hard on recruiting violations. It controlled TV rights as college games began to be broadcast around the country. It shut down athletic programs altogether—a move colloquially known as the “death penalty” (it has happened three times in Division I history). Some of these regulations, notably the exclusive control of TV rights, have been challenged or overturned in the courts over the past 40 years. But others have been expanded, to the extent that the N.C.A.A. annually publishes a 400-plus page manual governing the operation of Division I athletics, the highest-ranking division in collegiate sports.

And with more structure came more money.

In 1952, Byers signed an initial \$1.14 million television contract with NBC; today, the N.C.A.A. generates over \$1 billion in revenue every year. Conferences and individual universities make millions from combinations of television rights, sponsorships, tickets and merchandise—everything from the primetime Saturday night slot on ESPN to the branded Nike T-shirts at the bookstore.

## SCHOLARSHIP OR SALARY?

Despite the big business of college sports, the N.C.A.A. is adamantly opposed to anything that smells like “pay-for-play”—paying the athletes some kind of salary for their performance. College athletes are amateurs, not professionals, they insist.

But this suggests that the organization does not understand its own history. The N.C.A.A. is hell-bent on preserving an untainted amateurism that has never actually existed in intercollegiate athletics. Outside interests, as noted above, have always been mixed up in the system of college sports. The reality, as Mr. Byers said in his post-retirement book, is that athletes “receive only those benefits authorized by the overseers.”

You can see his point by looking backwards. Consider a Conference on Intercollegiate Athletics meeting in 1898, which described the distribution of scholarships as totally opposed to the spirit of college sports: “[T]he practice

of assisting [athletes] through college in order that they may strengthen the athletic teams is degrading to amateur sport,” they said. Today, however, this practice is not only accepted but encouraged. Scholarships are the principal financial benefit offered to college athletes.

Or consider that in recent years, the N.C.A.A. has made several increases in the benefits that college athletes may receive. For instance, in 2014 the organization decided that athletes could receive unlimited meals and snacks. And, as noted, within the next few years, athletes will have the ability to profit in some way from use of their name, image and likeness—something prohibited for decades.

The N.C.A.A.’s own history begs us to ask—can there be a better system for regulating college sports than this arbitrary, tangled-up mess of amateurism?

## THE PLAY ELEMENT

The answer is tied up with the previously mentioned Catholic concern for the whole human person. The Catholic approach to this issue begins with the argument that there is an intrinsic goodness in athletic activity. At their best, sports help people to develop in body and mind, and they encourage friendship with both teammates and competitors. Pope John Paul II, in the address to athletes cited earlier, described the ideal athlete along these same lines: “[O]ne must have honesty with oneself and with others, loyalty, moral strength (over and above physical strength), perseverance, a spirit of collaboration and sociability, generosity, broadness of outlook and attitude, and ability to live in harmony with others.”

There is another, perhaps more accessible way to look at this intrinsic goodness of sports. It is what Patrick Kelly, S.J., refers to as the “play element”—playing a sport for its own sake, for the enjoyment of it, because you love it.

Father Kelly, a professor at Seattle University, is the author of *Catholic Perspectives on Sports: From Medieval to Modern Times*. He has found that his students, many of them athletes, resonate with this concept of the play element as a way to understand sport in a human, perhaps even spiritual way.

Any athlete who has ever been swept up in the beautiful, inexplicable, creative flow of a successful practice session, or pushed his or her body beyond its perceived limits in the heat of competition, understands this play element. Such moments are ecstatic, joyful and often indescribable. A Catholic approach to sport, says Father Kelly, wants to encourage the pursuit of this activity. Nor should sport be kept isolated from other areas of an athlete’s life.

“In college, I started becoming more explicitly inter-



Patrick Ewing of Georgetown University puts up a shot against St. John's University in the semifinals of the Big East basketball tournament in 1984. Georgetown won the game 79 to 68. Ewing would go on to a Hall of Fame career in the N.B.A.

ested in my faith life,” said Father Kelly, who played football at Grand Valley State University in Allendale, Mich. “And then for a little bit of time in my 20s, I thought that I was supposed to put behind me these childish things [like athletics] and focus on spiritual things. But for me, that didn’t work well. I was so profoundly shaped as a human being by my participation in sports.... In order to understand my-

self, and even my spiritual life, I had to understand my own lived experiences.”

In a Catholic understanding, sports should be a cause for growth, for an athlete’s overall development. The play element is key. The amateurism of the N.C.A.A. encourages all of that, too. Playing the game for its own sake, loving the competition—the current system of col-

# At the end of the day, college athletics is about playing the sport you love and getting a great education at the same time.

College athletics admires these ideals.

So should Catholics, like the N.C.A.A., oppose salaries for college athletes?

## INTRINSIC AND EXTRINSIC

The answer to that question begins with a simple yet profound distinction, pointed out by Tom Massaro, S.J., a professor at Fordham University and an expert in Catholic social teaching. I had just finished telling him about my conversation with Father Kelly when he suggested something.

“That’s the intrinsic value of sports,” said Father Massaro, referring to the play element. “A sense of play, a sense of joy. It’s an end in itself.” But there exists another layer to college sports, he said: “When you get to the level of collegiate sports, or professional sports, extrinsic things come in. It’s good to make this distinction. The extrinsic says, ‘Forget about you and your enjoyable experience. What are the outside things that are related to your sports activity?’”

College athletes are in it for the fulfillment, the enjoyment, the skill building, said Father Massaro. “But surrounding that relationship of person to sport are larger relationships. Often they involve, for example, money, power or prestige,” he said. “It would be foolish to ignore the extrinsic.” For example: “It’s really an injustice to ignore the fact that someone is making a buck on a guy’s athletic ability.”

If one applies this intrinsic-extrinsic distinction to the N.C.A.A., it becomes clear that “amateurism” is an attempt to treat intrinsic and extrinsic concerns all in one stroke. The N.C.A.A. 2019-20 manual for Division I sports defines amateurism by explaining that athletes’ “participation should be motivated primarily by education and by the physical, mental and social benefits to be derived,” and they “should be protected from exploitation by professional and commercial enterprises.”



“It feels like we’re working backwards to preserve the system as much as possible,” said Mr. Foxworth. “Where I think we should start is making the system as just as possible,” he told me.

He and Father Massaro are circling the same idea: the N.C.A.A. system assumes that there is no place for athletes’ compensation in collegiate sports—but players, lawmakers and fans are continually calling for that assumption to be re-evaluated.

From a Catholic perspective, re-evaluating the rules around this does not necessarily negate the simple goodness of playing sports. The Catholic ethical framework wants both the intrinsic and extrinsic to work for the good of the human person.

## UNCHARTED TERRITORY

While the Catholic viewpoint offers a shared language for the conversation, it does not offer any easy answers to the question at the heart of this ongoing debate: To what extent





AJ Reynolds/Athens Banner-Herald via AP

DeVonta Smith of the University of Alabama hauls in the winning touchdown catch against the University of Georgia in the 2018 College Football Playoff National Championship. In 2017-18, the football programs at Alabama and Georgia generated \$111.1 million and \$129 million in revenue, respectively.

point it was a collegiate [educational] endeavor, and it still is that way for many athletes. But for the ‘big two’ sports, [football and basketball], it’s not at all collegiate sports, it’s professional sports.”

Does the financial data support Mr. Foxworth’s claim? Among “Power Five” schools—those who participate in one of the five major football conferences—about half of the football programs cleared a threshold of \$50 million in revenue in 2017-18 (the latest available data), with the University of Texas leading the way with a whopping \$143 million in revenue.

With that in mind, here is a thought experiment: How many Power Five football teams could afford to pay their best 40 players \$25,000 per year in addition to their scholarships? That adds up to \$1 million per year.

The results: Sixty out of the 65 could afford to pay this purely out of the profits generated from their football programs. But for 52 of the schools, this million dollars is less than 10 percent of their profits from football, so there would still be plenty of money to go around to other sports programs. And if you want to look for a different source of money, try coaches’ salaries—the lowest-paid coach at a Power Five school made \$1.8 million in 2019. Public university football coaches are often the highest-paid public employees in their state.

While \$25,000 is not an overwhelming amount of money, it could make a huge difference in the lives of college athletes. Managed properly, it could provide players with at least some small measure of insurance if injury ended their chances at playing professionally. It offers an opportunity to teach athletes proper financial management skills. And for those players who come from low-income backgrounds, it would mean they do not have to wait for their chance to play professional sports to begin assisting their families financially.

“A big misconception—and I’m not sure how many people really believe this—is that there isn’t enough money to pay the players,” said Mr. Foxworth.

“There’s plenty of money.”

*Kevin Jackson is a Joseph A. O’Hare, S.J., fellow at America. He graduated from Georgetown University in 2019, where he was a member of the varsity men’s golf team.*

should college athletes receive financial compensation? By venturing into the specifics, we are entering “uncharted territory” in Catholic social teaching, says Father Massaro.

Consider the case of a quarterback for a large institution. His contribution to the school helps generate ticket and merchandise sales, drives viewership for television networks and boosts the sales of the apparel brands that he wears while he plays. In return, he receives a scholarship, athletic training and coaching, equipment and an opportunity to showcase his skills. Is that enough?

“Any ethicist,” said Father Massaro, “would ask the question: ‘Why is the labor of this person—even if it’s enjoyable labor, like being a quarterback—why is the labor of that person benefiting a third party, such as the school, or the state [in the case of a public university], or even advertisers?’” A lot hinges on the answer to that question.

“I think it’s pretty straightforward,” Mr. Foxworth told me. “It’s a business like any other. Players are the labor, and I feel like those players deserve to be compensated. At one

# THE NEW AND ETERNAL COV

By Bill Cain

## *How liturgy has changed (and changed me) over the decades*

I am a priest.

I can tell the story of my life in Masses.

I can tell the story of the changes in the time of the Second Vatican Council in five Masses.

### **Mass 1: Holy Thursday, Spring 1966.**

I am not yet a priest. Far from it. I am a raw beginner.

I have been through Holy Week as an altar boy, but that was at home where the ceremonies were a few hours taken out of family life, school, play with friends, television, the world. In the novitiate, the ceremonies are not time taken from life. They are our life. For days and weeks we do nothing but prepare for these ceremonies.

And who are we? We are 100 men between the ages of 18 and 25 denying ourselves any other physical, sexual or intellectual outlet except preparation in silence and prayer for Holy Week.

The energy created is tremendous.

Powered by the energy of those 100 young driven talented generous young men, the ceremonies explode, make the past present and the present utterly compelling.

The washing of the feet—feet already washed clean—has a slight sense of comedy to it, but ultimately, Holy Thursday is a celebration of the creation of the Eucharist, the most sacred mystery we have.

It is the mystery we are studying eventually to perform. And all the music, all the incense, all the movement fades to silence and stillness as the novice master pronounces the words of consecration—still in Latin: *Hoc est enim corpus meum*. “This is my body.”

The words are not spoken to us. They are spoken to the bread. And a transformation occurs. A miracle. The bread is no longer bread but a living body and we explode in praise. The novice master places the host on our tongues; we take Christ into our bodies and surrender to the unity of God and human. And when we can bear the silence no longer, we burst into song so well-rehearsed that it feels spontaneous.

For me, 18, the ceremony—which has been revelation after revelation—has not reached the height of its revelation yet. The novice master then takes the host and carries it—wrapped in a silk blanket—out of the chapel to the altar of repose. We follow him, singing “All Glory, Laud and Honor.”

And all this energy—which has filled the large chapel to overflowing—must now narrow to pass through the long glass hallway, the Via Regis, that leads from the chapel to the altar of repose. Outside of the glass walls is darkness and night. Inside there is bright light and music. And like rushing water in a canyon, all that energy is compressed into the narrow passageway.

Compression intensifies the sound. The sound intensifies the emotion. I think my heart is going to explode with the sheer wonder of praising God and doing exactly what the song says we are doing. “The company of angels are praising Thee on high, and mortal men and all things created make reply.”

And this is still not the height of the experience.

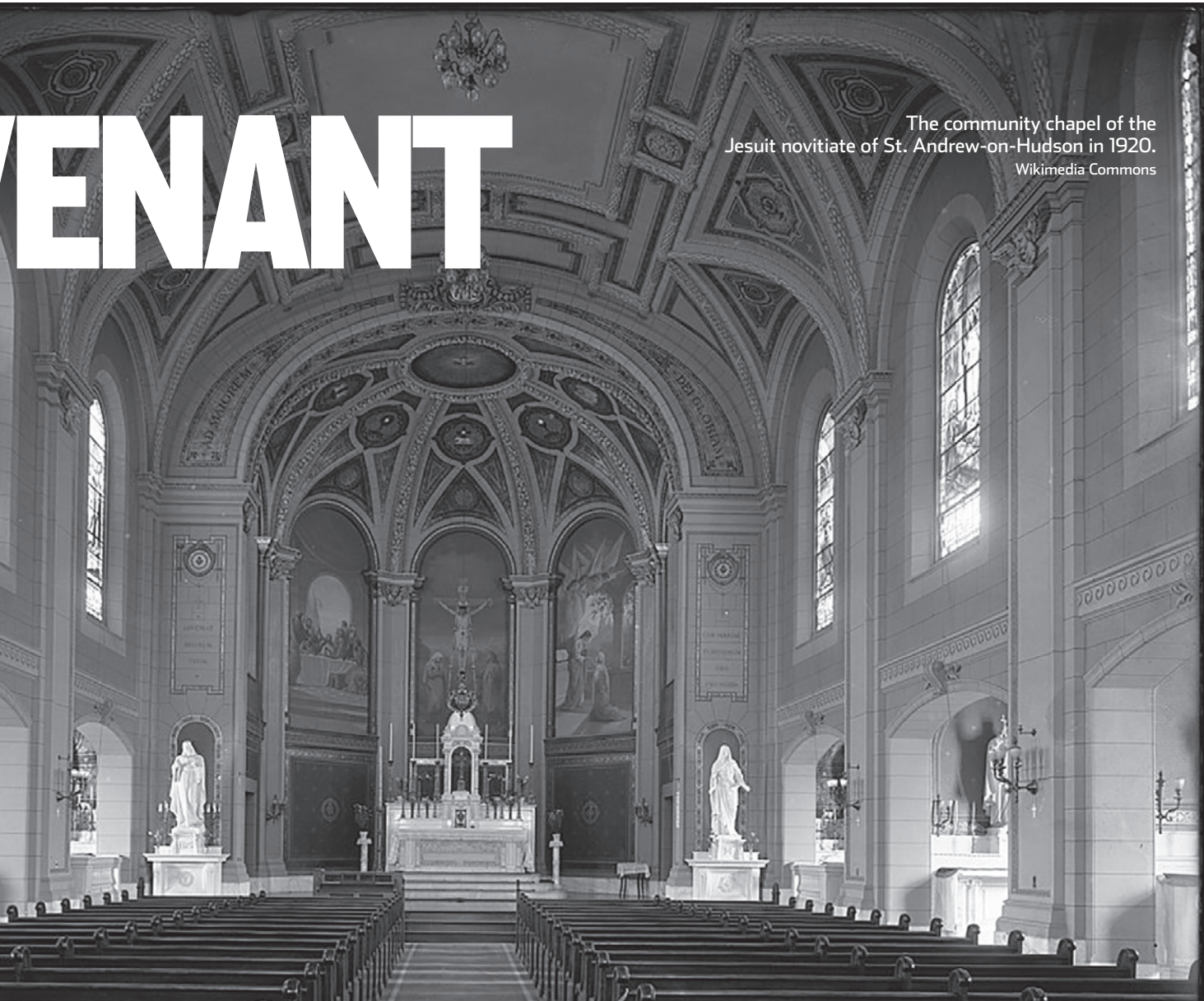
When the procession returns to the church, we discover the altars stripped and barren, the candles extinguished and smoking. Lights out. The door of the tabernacle is hanging open and God not there. The wonder of dazzlement yields to the wonder of desolation, which hits hard. Viscerally. The brilliance of the Mass has been a setup. The reality is loss and Good Friday begins.

I feel the loss so intensely that the novice master uncharacteristically expresses personal concern. He takes me



# TENANT

The community chapel of the Jesuit novitiate of St. Andrew-on-Hudson in 1920.  
Wikimedia Commons



aside and says, “Brother, are you alright?” To which I say, “Am I supposed to be?”

The ceremonies are working on me. The liturgy that gave us God in abundance has as quickly stolen God away and I ache with the loss.

There is no God.

Now, novice, now pray.

It all has worked, this elaborate, intensely rehearsed show, this pageant that is what it pretends to be. The monks who invented the stripping of the altars centuries ago have done their work brilliantly. And, had a monk from that time walked into our chapel, he would have recognized the ceremony. He also would have understood us. Nearly every element we had just performed had been performed


for centuries. We were the vessels that carried the ceremony forward. We did not matter as individuals. Habited, we were indistinguishable from generations of black-robed men who had been through the same ceremony that picked us up and placed us down in the heart of God.

## Mass 2: Summer 1966, Puerto Rico

Four months later, six scholastics sit on a patio with a young priest, all in street clothes. We are in Puerto Rico for six weeks—to learn some Spanish, to be exposed to the beauty and poverty and the spirituality of the island.

On the patio, we talk. We pass a plate. A cup. That’s all.

The medieval monk who would have recognized our Holy Thursday liturgy in the novitiate would not recognize



# No Catholic I knew would recognize this event as a Mass. And yet that's what it was.

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"The Last Supper," by Charles Blakeman, in a window of St. Etheldreda Church in London

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what we were doing here as a Mass. In fact, no Catholic I knew would recognize this event as a Mass.

And yet that's what it was. All the words were there. All the Mass parts. And this Mass was as shocking and transforming as Holy Thursday. The priest has placed the host not on our tongues but in our hands. No one—no one—now can realize the impact that had.

I think it is impossible now to conceive of the awe we had for the host as an object of worship. I mean that literally. I know people today have great reverence for the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and great reverence for Communion, but we were unimaginably deeper into eucharistic worship prior to the Second Vatican Council because nothing else was possible even to imagine.

It was inconceivable that a non-priest would touch the host. It was inconceivable that the host could touch anything but gold or linen. As altar servers, we held the plate under each mouth in case a host should fall. And if a host did fall, as it did only once when I was serving Mass, there was an audible gasp in the church. Everything stopped in its tracks. Nothing was more sacred than the host.

The rubrics for Benediction made this clear. Benediction is the host without the Mass. It was the host and nothing but the host. It was, in fact, more solemn than Mass. You could see it in the rubrics. Every genuflection is done on two knees.

And then, in Puerto Rico, the young priest distributing communion did not allow us to kneel and lean our heads back, open our mouths so that he could place the host within us. He told us to put out our hands. And he placed the host in our hands. The miracle was still there. But something else was also revealed.

The priest did not say "This is my body" to the bread. He did not say "This is my blood" to the wine. He said both things to us. And he—in the place of Christ—was speaking to us. Christ was offering himself to us.

Christ was not only changing the substance of the bread while the accidents remained the same. He was speaking to us. Christ materialized in quite a different way than we were used to, one that we had not experienced before. It was a new miracle.

Then came the moment when we all sat together in a circle holding the body of Christ in our hands. Six novices holding Christ in their hands. Not receiving Communion one at a time. But all of us together. We were no longer individuals. We were a community in Christ. The community was Christ. Another miracle.

And while not diminishing transubstantiation at all, a cascade of miracles—miracles that had been there but went unnoticed—appeared.

Leo Steinberg once wrote a book called *Leonardo's Incessant Last Supper*. It details a dozen different interpretations of Da Vinci's famous painting. Each explains the painting. Steinberg makes you understand that they are all true at the same time. That was the experience of the miracles happening in us and around us.

We were awash in previously unimagined miracles. We novices brought these rubrics with us back to the novice master. We were absolutely confident of our experience. And the novice master looked at us strangely.

I was confident of the multiple miracles of the Mass and was sure more would reveal themselves.

At that moment on the patio in Puerto Rico, no one would have recognized the Mass. Except perhaps Jesus and his disciples. They certainly would not have understood our Holy Thursday, but they might have recognized themselves in this encounter on a patio in Puerto Rico.

## **Mass 3: Shrub Oak, a Jesuit center for philosophy studies, 18 months later, 1967/8**

There was nothing remarkable about the Easter Triduum that year at this enormous seminary. The seminary itself was a cross between a prison and an insane asylum. The superior had lost control of the house and retreated into his own world, leaving 100 seminarians to run amok. The only truly interesting thing that happened regarding Easter happened a few days before the ceremony.

A classmate of mine, a mad scientist type—the type about whom, after a tragic event, people would say he was quiet and kept to himself—was making an explosive mixture that could be the basis for the Easter fire so that it would flare up dramatically and die down quickly. As



he was grinding the mixture—effectively he was making homemade gunpowder—it blew up.

Had he succeeded and had it been used in the Easter fire and had it exploded then, he might have killed the unpopular superior and been plausibly charged with premeditated murder. Instead, the only consequence was that he blew off his eyebrows, leaving him with a permanently surprised look on his face, not unlike Beaker in the Muppets.

He later left the Jesuits and, some time after, killed himself.

I am no longer a pure beginner. Three years of daily liturgies and I can field any kind of Mass a priest wishes to say. Private Masses continue as the liturgy migrates into English. In my third year as a Jesuit, in my habit still, I am serving Mass for the priest who teaches math and logic. We are in a private chapel. The Mass is in Latin. He is facing the wall and speaking to the bread and wine. All of which is perfectly acceptable and retains its beauty.

I am kneeling on the edge of the raised platform on which sits the altar on which the priest is saying Mass. I am doing the proper responses. In spite of my seven years of Latin, there is no sense of dialogue. The words and the gestures are rote but reverent. All fine.

Then comes the Our Father and the greeting of peace, which has now been integrated into the Mass. When the time comes, I stand up from my kneeling position and step onto the priest's platform. I extend my hand. The priest does not turn to greet me. I am facing his back. I think, given the newness of the custom, he might have forgotten. So I say, "Father, the peace of Christ."

He looks over his shoulder with anger and shakes his head like a pitcher shaking off a catcher's signals. I am confused. I don't move. He nods me back to my place. We are caught between two worlds.

Some years later, when I am attending Mass in Boston, I cross the aisle and extend my hand to a couple who, like the priest, shake their heads, but they are also verbal. Arms tightly folded, they say what the priest was thinking. I say, "The peace of Christ," and they say, "We don't believe in it."

Which is what he says explicitly to me as he unvests after Mass, and a gulf opens.

We are separated by the liturgy that should join us. He was telling me he did not believe in the liturgy as it was evolving. He was telling me more than that. He was telling me that he was a one-miracle-a-Mass priest. And I was no longer a one-miracle scholastic.

#### **Mass 4: Boston College, 1968**

I am in my fifth year as a Jesuit. I have lived in three large traditional communities. In five years, each of those three large communities has closed. The beloved novitiate, St. Andrew-on-Hudson, gone. The hated Shrub Oak, closing. Weston-in-the-Woods, shut down and broken into seven houses scattered near the Boston College campus.

I did not order the closing of the large houses. I did not desire their closing. I had not foreseen their closing. I had joined an order that was large and institutional. And here I sit in an ordinary house just off the Boston College campus with six other scholastics and Dave and Hans—two priests



# The Vatican II documents did not come with an operations manual.



who are no longer Father but Dave and Hans. And this is now religious life.

It looks nothing—nothing at all—like the religious life I had entered a few years before. And there is no guidance. The Vatican II documents did not come with a hymnal. They did not come with an operations manual. They did not come with a map.

Consequently, the scholastics in their early 20s attempt to fill the void that leadership has left. In my case, seven scholastics live with two priests in a house just off campus. We spent the summer remodeling the one-family house to accommodate nine individual rooms. The scholastics are all juniors and seniors in college and as good a group of highly motivated, smart, generous people as you could wish for.

And, again, no leadership. I have a very firm grasp on who was in charge of the large communities. I cannot tell you who was superior of the seven houses we were now living in. I am not complaining. I am marveling.

What structure there was arose from among us. Much of my formation that year came from my relationship with my closest friend in the house, Frank Quinlan—who was, in my opinion, the best of a very good bunch.

Frank and I engaged in a game where, if one of us expressed a wish or a vision for what we thought our lives should be, the other would say, “I dare you.” It could be as simple as I want to grow a beard. I dare you. Or as complex as Frank saying he would like to hitchhike across the country. I said, “I dare you.” Frank disappeared and a week later I heard from him in California.

We could do almost anything because no one was minding the store. Frank would eventually dare me to fulfill a vision I had of religious life and he changed my life entirely. Actually, responsibility for fulfilling that dare began my adult life. I am very grateful to Frank. Perhaps this life wasn’t so unlike that of the first Jesuit companions.

At the same time, the world was breaking apart. With the draft lottery, the government was choosing which young men on campus were going to be killed in Vietnam.

Lives were at stake. Lives of people I was sitting next to in class. I got a disastrously low draft number but was protected by clerical status. It was joked that the Jesuit Latin motto A.M.D.G., “For the greater glory of God,” actually meant “Avoid military draft gracefully.”

Kent State happened. National Guardsmen fired on students protesting President Nixon’s invasion of Cambodia and killed several. The colleges that make up a large part of Boston’s population shut down. At Boston College, we were already on a student strike protesting the firing of the feminist theologian Mary Daly. Now we shut down completely. All classes were canceled and the very last semblance of structure for our lives disappeared.

So we find ourselves—young in the Society of Jesus still—with nothing. There is no chapel. There is no place to pray. There is no leadership. There is no organ. No gold. No linen. There is a living room and a book. There are no hosts. No dedicated altar wine. No beeswax candles. There is just us, the Spiritual Exercises in our back pocket (literally), tremendous goodwill and tremendous social problems and we sit down in the living room to have Mass.

I want to point out that we liked one another. It would be fair to say that we loved one another. We start a Mass in the living room. Dave was saying it. He was not going to give a homily.

There would be a discussion.

The discussion started calmly enough, but like most things that were happening that year, it escalated. It became a debate. The debate became heated. Became an argument. The argument became inflamed.

We were trying desperately to find a way to live our lives as Jesuits and bring what we knew of Christ to bear on what we knew of the world. What did Christ want of us? The fight, the discussion, the argument, the seeking for a vision went until very late at night. Then well into the morning. We never got further into the Mass than that.

We loved one another, but that wasn’t enough. Pretty much everybody from that house later left the Jesuits. Only I and one other man were left and he died of AIDS in the first sweep of that plague. Frank, the best of us, left and was killed in a motorcycle accident a year later.

## **Mass 5: The Catholic Worker, New York City, 1982**

Holy Thursday night once again. I am now a priest celebrating Holy Thursday night liturgy at the Catholic Worker where I have become a Mass priest when they cannot find better. It is an honor to say Mass for the Workers.

In many ways, it will be the opposite of the glorious Holy Thursday in the novitiate. It will not be all male. It

will not be draped in silk and linen. There will be no roaring organ. It will not be almost exclusively white. It will not be all middle class.

In short, while the substance remains the same, almost all of the accidents have changed. It will be gritty. The altar will be the cutting table on which the food is prepared for the homeless. The homeless and those who care for them will be the congregation.

I will have the honor of washing their feet. And the washing of the feet will not be purely symbolic. Some of these feet will need washing. Some will be cold and need warming. Some are cracked and need a gentle touch. As a priest, I will get to be Christ doing this. And this is the continuing mystery of priesthood.

And the Workers need care themselves. Dorothy Day has been dead for two years. As the Worker is an anarchist organization, it could very easily fly apart or turn authoritarian. But Jane, Cassie, Frank and others keep Dorothy's spirit—Christ's spirit as seen in Dorothy—alive.

When I have finished washing feet, I am prepared to move forward with the offertory and the canon of the Mass. One of the workers in the congregation stops me. She says the washing of the feet isn't over yet. I look around for someone else's feet to wash.

She says to me, "Sit down." And we all laugh because I am so surprised by this reversal. And she washes my feet. And she is Christ and Christ is all in all.

The priest is not separate from the congregation. And he is not entirely in charge. We are all saying Mass—and it is peaceful, moving, gritty, beautiful and miraculous.

Frank Donovan, an intimate of Dorothy—he is all over her diary—approaches me at the altar/cutting table after the "Holy, Holy, Holy." This should be a time when we are drifting into profound quiet. But Frank comes up and whispers in my ear, "I know this is crazy but..."

I wait. He smiles. He looks down at the arrangement of bread and wine I have before me. It all looks perfectly proper to me. I look back at him. He says, "The chalice isn't on the corporal." And it wasn't. He feels foolish calling me on this rubric. As if the miracle won't reach the cup if it is off the corporal. He knows the miracle will happen no matter where the chalice is. But maybe not. And he wants the rubrics to be correct.

He wants to protect the miracle. I think this is lovely. I move the chalice. I say the words.

Miracles abound.

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Bill Cain, S.J. is a Jesuit priest and a Peabody Award-winning screenwriter.

# OUTREACH 2020

## LGBTQ Catholic Ministry Gathering



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For more information and to register see this website:

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Deadline for registration: April 1, 2020

# When Russians Spoke Latin

*And how the Jesuits played a role*

By Brian P. Bennett



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Russia has been much in the news these past few years—and not in a good way. The takeover of Crimea, the military intervention in Syria and especially the skullduggery during the 2016 U.S. presidential election suggest to some that we are in a new Cold War against an aggressive adversary and disruptor of democracies. A Time magazine cover depicted the White House being overtaken by an amalgam of the Kremlin and the Candy Land cupolas of St. Basil’s cathedral—a kind of red menace redux. Gallup and the Pew Research Center report increasingly negative attitudes in the United States and much of Europe toward Russia. At the same time, just as “fellow travelers” in the West tended to idealize life under Soviet Communism, some Western conservatives now turn to Putin’s Russia as a lodestar of traditional values.

The Rev. John Meyendorff, the eminent Orthodox scholar, once observed that Russia, more than any other European nation, is “treated in the light of generalized theories.” Indeed, that country has often been assessed—by foreigners and natives alike—in simplistic and binary terms: Eastern as opposed to Western, Orthodox instead of Catholic, despotic not democratic, and so on. There is a long tradition of this type of discourse in the West, from pre-modern travelogues to popular television shows. Everyone knows, for instance, that the ruthless Klingons on “Star Trek” represented Russian Commies. Some years ago, Richard Hellie, a well-known history professor at the University of Chicago, suggested that pre-modern Russia was a “right-brained” civilization—artistic, creative, but prone to fantasy—unlike the “left-brained” West, which was soberly logical.

Russians have generated their own tropes and stereotypes about non-Russians. The term *nemtsy*, for instance—meaning “dumb ones”—was the traditional Russian designation for Ger-

mans or Protestants. Like the Greek *barbaros*, the expression implies linguistic and cultural oafishness. Ivan Kireyevsky’s 19th-century treatise “On the Nature of European Culture and on its Relationship to Russian Culture” reads like a funhouse inversion of Hellie’s hypothesis.

The West, says Kireyevsky, is characterized by “cold analysis...the self-propelling scalpel of reason...the abstract syllogism” and “frigid ratiocination.” A logic-chopping mentality prevails in the West, the end result being a heartless civilization dominated by “external, formal activity.” The West has shiny things, but at least Russia has soul.

So the West looks down on Russia, and Russia is only too happy to return the favor. A closer examination, however, can complicate this pattern of mutually assured disapproval. The relationship between Russia and the West is in fact quite complicated, with plenty of zigs and zags across the boundary lines. Case in point: Anyone who has read *War and Peace* is acutely aware that Russian elites were enamored of French language and culture.

In a very different context, “Runglish” (a mashup of Russian and English) has facilitated communication aboard the International Space Station. Lingua francas (or in French: *langues véhiculaires*) help bridge gaps between people who speak different tongues. A particularly striking example of this phenomenon is when Russians were immersed in Latin, the iconic language of Catholicism and the learned lingua franca of Western Europe. Jesuits played a part in this surprising turn of events.

### **The Latin Sickness**

Why surprising? For one thing, Latin had not been part of the civilizational startup kit the Slavs received from Byzantium. Christianity came to Rus (the East Slavic polity that eventually became Ukraine, Belarus and Russia)

# The West looks down on Russia, and Russia is only too happy to return the favor in a pattern of mutually assured disapproval.

in the 10th century, couched in Old Church Slavonic, a bookish language developed a century earlier by the Byzantine missionary brothers Sts. Cyril and Methodius and chock-full of Greek terminology. Over the centuries, Latin played a minimal role in Russian culture—a point often tsk-tsked by Western visitors, who tied the lack of Latin learning to perceived Russian backwardness. In *A Curious and New Account of Muscovy in the Year 1689*, Foy de la Neuville claimed, “Only four in that whole, vast country speak Latin.” Later in the text he unspools some familiar stereotypes: “To tell the truth, the Muscovites are barbarians. They are suspicious and mistrustful, cruel, sodomites, gluttons, misers, beggars and cowards....”

Moreover, in addition to the lack of Latin studies, there was a strain of rhetoric, inherited from Byzantium and amplified in Russia, against the “Latins.” Like a dungball, this term rolls linguistic, cultural and religious negativities into one. According to one clerical polemic, Latin books “are filled with guile and deception, heresy and godlessness.” “When I began to read Greek books,” wrote a Muscovite prelate, “I came to know the Latin deceit and to understand the innovations and errors and depravities in their writings; and I spat upon all of them....”

This was not just ecclesiastical contempt; similar themes sounded in folk culture as well. Syphilis was called the “Latin sickness.” To tell someone to “Go to *Latinstvo!*” was like saying “Go to Hell.” It was customary to believe that the Devil spoke Latin and wore Western clothes. In sum, in both Russian folklore and church polemics, *Latinstvo* (the Latin West, or “Latindom”) represented a no-go zone of heresy and debauchery, a kind of Evil Empire threatening Holy Russia.

And yet, an inventory conducted in 1802 of a typical Russian Orthodox library (the seminary in Smolensk) re-

vealed some astonishing numbers: 1,240 books in Latin, 467 in Russian/Slavonic, 167 in Greek, 40 in German, 39 in French, 33 in Hebrew and three in Swedish. How did this remarkable turnabout happen?

## Peter the Great

The answer, in part at least, is Peter the Great (1672-1725). As is well known, the towering, energetic emperor was eager to learn from the West. He even ordered an entire city be built from scratch, St. Petersburg, as a “window on the West.” During his reign, Russian elites increasingly turned to Latin (as well as French, German, Dutch and Italian) as a way of plugging into European civilization. An ideological justification was articulated in the *Trilingual Lexicon* (Slavonic-Greek-Latin) of 1704. The preface contends that Greek is the language of the original “holy books and church rituals,” while Slavonic is the language of praise. As for Latin?

It has been included as a third language because today this language is used around the world more than others in civil and educational matters. The same [is true] for all kinds of sciences and arts that are necessary for human society. A great many books have been translated [into Latin] from other languages, and many are still composed in this language. To sum up, there is no one who can do without it, who would not desire to have it available for his needs, whether an artist or a soldier skillful in military matters.

In other words, Latin was viewed as an indispensable vehicle of knowledge. Thus began a century-plus of Latinity on Russian soil, a period when scientists and seminarians studied and even spoke the venerable language, much like their counterparts in the West.

Since Latin was the dominant language of science, it is no surprise that when the Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg was established in 1724 (another brainchild of Peter the Great), Latin was the in-house language. Of course Russians, being new at this game, with no real history of scientific inquiry, needed to import scholars to get things going. These foreigners, mostly from German-speaking lands, brought with them the entire apparatus of Western academe—Latin-language lectures, debates, dissertations, report cards, ceremonial orations and more.

Some, like the mathematical genius Leonhard Euler, did important work that was published in the academy’s

flagship journal, *Commentarii Academiae Scientiarum Petropolitanae* (Transactions of the Academy of Sciences of St. Petersburg). Scholars in traditional centers of learning like Vienna, Stockholm, London, Uppsala, Edinburgh and Leipzig sometimes wrote in Latin to their counterparts in “Petropolis.” Thus, Latin helped kickstart what would become Russia’s renowned track record of excellence in math and science. More unexpected was the way Latin scholarship penetrated Russian Orthodoxy. This is where the Jesuits come on the scene.

### Fighting Fire With Fire

During the so-called Counter-Reformation, the Society of Jesus had been quite active in Eastern Europe, especially Ukraine, in their push for Orthodox Christians, deemed schismatic, to return to union with Rome. They established a network of schools that attracted the best and brightest of society. These schools had a successful academic formula: the famed *Ratio Studiorum*, the systematic “plan of studies” that started with several levels of grammar before moving on to poetics and rhetoric and culminating with philosophy and theology.

Seeing the proselytizing success of the Society of Jesus in Eastern Europe, some Orthodox clerics decided to defend their expression of the faith using the very tools that were challenging it. They borrowed the thoroughly Latinate curriculum of the Jesuit *collegium* and made it their own. The Orthodox Theological Academy in Kyiv was central in this fight-fire-with-fire endeavor. It would later serve as a blueprint for schools across Russia, where—rather stunningly—Latin became deeply embedded in ecclesiastical education.

Latin was never used for prayer or liturgy, but it was baked into the curriculum, as with the *Ratio Studiorum*. The main grammar used was the three-volume *De Institutione Grammatica*, by Manuel Álvares, a Portuguese Jesuit. This was the same text studied in Jesuit schools all around the world. In terms of theology, pride of place went to the *Compendium Orthodoxae Theologicae Doctrinae*, by Hyacinthus (Iakinf) Karpinski, an Orthodox monk from the prominent Kirillo-Belozersky Monastery. The contents—complete with quotations from the Vulgate—read much like a standard-issue Scholastic-era handbook.

Whether in science or theology, Russian students had to learn to speak the Latin code. They adapted multilingual conversation books that were then commonplace in Western Europe (for example, *Colloquia Scholastica—Shkol’nye Razgovory—Schul-Gesprache [School Conversations]*), thanks to which they could say things like: “*Salve, mi amice! Zdravstvuy, drug*

*moi! [Hi, my friend!]*” Or, perhaps, “*Quid loqueris, inepte? Shto ty govorišh, durak? [What are you saying, fool?]*”

By 1800, the archbishop of Moscow could declare: “Our clergymen are regarded by foreigners already as almost illiterate, unable to speak either French or German. Our honor is supported by the fact that we can speak and write Latin.”

### Enduring Influence

Not everyone was happy with this state of affairs. Seminarians chafed against studying a subject they found useless for their priestly duties (the Divine Liturgy still being conducted in Church Slavonic). Some laypeople also weighed in on the matter. In 1835, Count Nikolai Protasov issued a blistering critique of the clergy and its Latinate jargon: “You are our teachers in faith. But we cannot understand you.... [Y]ou have invented a sort of a language for yourselves like physicians, mathematicians and sailors. It is impossible to apprehend you without interpreting. It is no good at all.” Thus, Russia joined not only the venerable tradition of Latin studies—but the equally old tradition of griping about the language.

Over the course of the 18th century, Latin gave way in the scientific domain to German, French and eventually Russian itself. It lasted longer, until about 1840, in seminary education. That would seem to be the end of the line. Yet Latin left its mark on Russian culture. Just consider the Cyrillic alphabet. Though we think of it as quintessentially Russian, the current shape of the letters is really the result of, once again, Peter the Great. The ever-meddling ruler demanded that typographers make the ornate Slavonic script simpler and easier to read, closer to the texts he knew from England and Holland—in a word, more Latinate. This is the origin of the so-called civil script, as opposed to the church script used for Slavonic literature. To this day, then, the very letterforms of the Russian Cyrillic alphabet reveal a subtle but indelible Latin influence.

At this particularly fraught moment in national and international affairs, one marked by suspicion and antagonism, it may be salutary to set aside stereotypes and false dichotomies and pause to consider that remarkable period of intellectual and cross-cultural rapport when—*mirabile dictu*—Russia and the West spoke the same language.

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Brian P. Bennett is a professor of religious studies at Niagara University. He is the author of *Religion and Language in Post-Soviet Russia and Sacred Languages of the World: An Introduction*.

# The Soul of Sports

By Sherri Retif



# MONEY HAS WARPED YOUTH ATHLETICS. IGNATIAN SPIRITUALITY OFFERS A BETTER WAY TO PLAY.

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At age 8, I would sit on the back steps of our family house in New Orleans and watch my brothers shoot hoops in the driveway. Biting my nails and tapping my foot, I could not wait until they finished. I wanted a turn, but I was too young to play with them. My parents would take me to my brothers' high school varsity games. Perched on the top row of the bleachers, chin rested on fist, eyes following the ball like a pendulum, I was mesmerized by this sport.

A few years later, I played on my first team. Around that time, the Knights of Columbus held a Pass, Dribble, Shoot competition nearby. The gym was packed with participants, the excitement electric. I had done well, but I vividly remember cheering loudly for my best friend as she executed her dribbling skills around the three tire-poles.

But there was a moment where time paused and I heard my competitive voice ask, "By cheering so loudly for my friend, am I pulling against myself?" The sound of the whistle brought me back to real time and ended the competition both on the floor and in my head. My best friend won and would go on to compete at the next level. I was happy for her, really happy, but I wondered about that conflicted voice within me. How could something that was so much fun elicit this tension? Is it a good thing to want to be the best?

It is a tension that has fascinated me—and followed me—over decades. I have had success as a basketball player on A.A.U. and Division I college levels and then as a high school girls basketball coach, but for years I struggled with that tension. My Catholic upbringing suggested sports were for children; finding real meaning in life required some altruistic endeavor. I questioned my passion for coaching, wondering if it was self-serving. When my children were young, I walked away from coaching several times but was always invited back to new opportunities.

The truth is, I was in somewhat uncharted waters. I was among that first wave of young women to benefit from Title IX, which required federally funded schools

to provide equal opportunities for women and men in athletics. In 1978, I became the first girl from my high school to receive an athletic scholarship to college. People forget how few athletic opportunities existed for girls then. Before the passage of Title IX in 1972, just 294,000 high school girls played sports. (To put that in perspective, last year 3.4 million young women participated on a high school team of some sort.)

Young women are passionate about high school sports. We have come lightyears in terms of opportunities since the 1970s, but in that time I have also witnessed how consumerism, athletic scholarships and overemphasis on winning is causing a paradigm shift. While parents get their children involved in youth sports for the overall development of fitness and life skills, these ideals often become buried under unhealthy competition and commercialization.

Mark Hyman's book *Until It Hurts: America's Obsession with Youth Sports and How It Harms Our Kids* illustrates this shift. He tells the story of a Wisconsin pediatrician, Robert Rohloff, M.D., who surveyed 376 parents of elementary and middle school athletes about their goals for their children's participation in sports: "Almost 40 percent, a startling figure, told Rohloff they hoped their children would someday play for a college team. Twenty-two parents said they expected their children to become professional athletes." Statistically speaking, the reality is that only 3.5 percent of female high school basketball players will ever play at the college level. And from that 3.5 percent, less than one in 100 will be drafted to play professionally in the W.N.B.A.

With this focus on outcome-oriented goals, parents and athletes can be sucked into the investment vortex. The focus naturally becomes a return on the investment of their time and money. As a result, their well-being is confused with external achievements that often leave a lasting residue of unhealthy anxiety and pressure.

Over the course of my coaching career I have won-

# When we shift our focus away from the scoreboard, we notice that competition offers transcendent moments of being a part of something bigger than oneself.

dered about that same question that I wrestled with as a 10-year-old. Is it possible for an integrative approach to mind, body and spirit to be combined with the desire to compete? This has led me to another question: What are these young athletes seeking?

As a parent of two athletes and after coaching for over 20 years, I decided to pursue a doctor of ministry degree, researching an evolving theology of sport that draws on Ignatian spirituality. St. Ignatius invited us to discern spiritual meaning in everyday experience. I found that such discoveries occur frequently on the basketball court.

During my research I asked young women athletes to reflect on the meaning and purpose of their athletic experiences. I noticed three recurring themes: the cultivation of right relationships, a desire for values-based decision-making and the recognition of transcending moments in sports.

In my interviews, evidence of the importance of reciprocal and mutual relationships that are life-giving and empowering was clear. “My coach is an all-around good guy. He makes you feel that he can put himself in your shoes,” one participant said. “He encourages you to ask questions and makes you feel your questions are important.” The suggestion that the coach “can put himself in her shoes” hints at this right relationship. It speaks to

a collaborative approach and dissipates any top-down management style.

“One of my teammates was kind of like my big sister,” another young woman explained. “She really helped me with the mental aspects of the game because I’m really hard on myself. She was always there to pick me up—sometimes it was tough love. The bond through sports actually carries on beyond the time you actually play together. She turned out to be my best friend.”

The importance of valued relationships in sport is difficult to overstate. An upperclassman carries a big influence with an underclassman: There is a natural power dynamic that can facilitate deep bonding. Conversely, this power dynamic, when abused, can be a fundamental factor in horror stories about hazing.

My interviews also revealed the role of conscious, values-based decision-making that demonstrated these young women’s sense of self-knowledge, self-determination and openness to growth. Margaret shared her insights on how her coach allowed her to process a challenging situation:

My coach senior year had coached me on junior varsity, taught me in class and trusted me. When I didn’t get selected captain, I knew she respected me because she pulled me into her office and talked to me about it. She told me that while I didn’t have the title, I was still a leader. It taught me that what really determines my character is how I handle this situation. This coach maintained a positive relationship with me all throughout the year.

This coach was proactive in providing that space and support, and we witness here an athlete who was able to surrender and reconstruct the meaning of both captain and character. I am convinced that such little kernels of support and validation provide the constant tilling for meaningful growth experiences in the lives of young athletes.

When we shift our focus away from the scoreboard, playing time and scholarships, we notice that competition invites spiritual and emotional growth and offers transcendent moments in which an athlete experiences being a part of something bigger than herself. One student shared her experience of a such a moment:

Last year there was a freshman on the team, and in the middle of the season she got sick. She was

hospitalized, and we didn't know why. We knew we couldn't help her with her illness, but we could show support. Her father told us that our support was helping not just his daughter but the entire family. It made us stop and realize that being on a team had a bigger meaning than winning or losing.

These stories indicate a potential to shift perspective away from the manipulative and domineering status approach to competition to one that is integrative and nourishing. It is an approach that nurtures spiritual maturity, as opposed to just ego fulfillment.

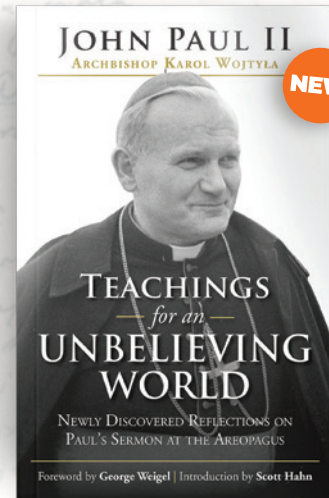
"Sports is a spiritual identity-finder," said Kendall Grasela, a former player of mine and the current starting point guard at the University of Pennsylvania. "Aside from being Catholic, I do think spirituality and sports go hand and hand for some. I think spirituality emerges through the connection you make with teammates, coaches and trainers as well as during the tight game moments that go either way—missing the game-winning shot and hitting the game-winning shot." It is a sense of spirituality that grew for her as she reached higher levels of competition and her love for the game expanded.

While girls' high school basketball is about mastering a technique and training for success, there is a depth of experience that can easily be lost amid the anxiety surrounding competition and obsession with scholarships. Too often buried beneath that noise is an invitation to pay attention to the inner tensions of the athlete's experiences. It is an invitation that students, coaches, parents and administrators would be wise to pay attention to.

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*Sherri Retif is a high school basketball coach and spiritual director with a doctor of ministry degree from Fordham University. She played college basketball at Tulane University and is honored in Tulane's Athletics Hall of Fame and the Montgomery County Coaches Hall of Fame.*

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# *The Last American Grown-Ups*

By Elizabeth Grace Matthew



In 2013, Sheryl Sandberg (born in 1969, a member of Generation X) published the best seller *Lean In*, which encouraged working women to ask themselves: “What would you do if you weren’t afraid?”

For many of Sandberg’s contemporaries, the answer, according to Ada Calhoun’s 2020 best seller, *Why We Can’t Sleep*, is apparently: Catch some much-needed z’s.

According to Calhoun (born in 1976, also a member of Generation X), middle-class American women in their 40s and 50s are so wracked with anxiety and guilt about the state of their lives that they cannot sleep, even though they are exhausted. They are frustrated with the lack of cooperation from their husbands and older children, overwhelmed with the responsibilities of caring for young children and aging parents at the same time, and guilt-ridden about their failure to achieve all that they dreamed of in the various aspects of their full lives.

Calhoun argues that the women of Generation X were set up for disappointment because of the assurances that they received in childhood that they could, in fact, “have it all.” She relates story after story of women who are working hard professionally, caring for others in their lives, worrying about money, stressing about health and asking themselves where they went wrong, since they believed that they were supposed to accomplish so much more than what feels like mere survival.

*Why We Can’t Sleep* ends with a rejection of the unrealistic yardstick invented by the second-wave feminism of


the baby boomers by which Generation X’s women have appeared to fall short. Calhoun congratulates the middle-class women of Generation X: “We...came up relying on our own wits...we took control. We worked hard...without much help. We took responsibility....We should be proud of ourselves.”

They should indeed, but not simply because they worked hard and made the necessary compromises to meet their responsibilities. And not because they did so while contending with economic instability, changing roles for women and evolving technology. After all, that describes the experiences of the vast majority of women, in every place and time throughout history.

The same middle-class women of Generation X who see the most distance between the “all” they set out to have and the “some” they are working so hard to maintain should congratulate themselves because their very struggle indicates that they have managed something extraordinary: to embody adult responsibility in perhaps the only culture in history in which women and men are encouraged to pursue not just eternal youth but perpetual childhood. “I can have it all” is, after all, a sentence most commonly uttered by preschoolers in defiance of the necessary limitations imposed on them by grown-ups.

Lisa Damour, a psychologist, New York Times columnist and best-selling author, separates actual grown-ups (people who behave in a mature way) from mere adults (people over the age of 18) in three ways: Number one, they assess risk based

According to a new book, middle-class women in their 40s and 50s are so wracked with anxiety and guilt about the state of their lives that they cannot sleep.



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# Though they have outperformed their predecessors in every particular, Gen-X women are less happy than women were in 1970. ●●

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on actual danger rather than on the likelihood of getting caught; number two, they acknowledge and accept the limitations of their own parents; and number three, they delay short-term gratification in pursuit of something bigger.

Using this framework, it is easy to see how Generation X's middle-class women have been *acting* like adults on all three metrics, but *feeling* like children per number two. That is, they have implicitly acknowledged their parents' limitations. They recognize that a delay of gratification (not just a structural overhaul harkening a utopia in which everyone can be gratified all the time) is essential to achieving what they value most. And thus, they have rejected in practice the notion of "having it all" bequeathed to them by the second-wave feminists of the baby boom generation.

Yet Generation X came of age in a culture awash in dreams of women's perpetual and idealized childhood ("I can have everything I want right now") being sold as feminist empowerment. Because of this, it is hard for them to recognize that their problem

(i.e., living lives full of hard work, tough choices and dreams deferred) isn't about their failure to achieve, but about their predecessors' failure to count. Having it all in one day doesn't work if a day remains 24 hours and "it all" takes 36.

Take "Sex and the City," the HBO show about Generation X women living and dating in New York in the late 1990s and early 2000s that was based on the New York Observer column turned best-selling book by Candace Bushnell (fittingly, a baby boomer). The show spent six cosmopolitan-drenched, stiletto-clacking seasons idealizing a moneyed, stylish alternative to early marriage (in which the baby boomers had still, for the most part, participated). Instead of Betty Friedan's "problem with no name," Carrie, Miranda, Charlotte and Samantha had many problems with many names.

Their biggest and most enduring problem was their own poor decision-making. The ladies of "Sex and the City" spend the better part of the series making shortsighted romantic choices that had far more to do with immediate

gratification than with any long-term game plan. For example, the central anti-heroine, Carrie Bradshaw, decides that she will not marry her attractive but slightly mawkish beau, Aiden. As a result, she isn't relegated to eternal singlehood, nor to a semi-abusive marriage with the older Russian artist she starts dating a few years later, nor to partnership with another version of Aidan that she might meet and settle for in her early 40s. No, she is rescued—in Paris, no less—by her ostensible true love, "Big," who has only treated her terribly and who is a highly problematic bet for marriage, given that he has been married twice before and cheated on both his wives (on one of them with Carrie herself).

So the takeaway message of "Sex and the City" is: Be as spacey and nihilistic as you want, and if you're stylish enough you will still get your happily ever after. So, one might infer: "If I don't get a simple, glamorous ending, then there must be something wrong with me."

Thus, it seems that Generation X women have been driven to insomnia by the cognitive dissonance of their lives.

The boomers' utopic vision of what life would be like for women after feminism became mainstream was so compelling a catalyst to achievement that to reject it emotionally seems impossible. Yet women of Generation X are rejecting it empirically, with every adult concession to the realities of time (there are only so many hours in the day), space (you can only be in one place at a time) and biology (for women, depending on what their "all" entails, age may matter).

Meanwhile, though they have in fact outperformed their predecessors in every particular (educational attainment, professional achievement and stable marriage), they are less happy than women were in 1970, before second-wave feminism spearheaded necessary reforms that made higher education for women more accessible, professional advancement for women more achievable, social inclusion for single women more common and domestic arrangements for married women more equitable.

It is easy for opponents of feminism to point to the decrease in women's happiness and conclude that feminist reforms have been a failure, just as it is easy for feminists to point to the same decrease and argue that those reforms have not gone far enough. But in reality, this statistic about women's decreasing happiness has its oldest data point in a moment (1970) when second-wave feminism was ascendant and women's expectations were soaring beyond not just the limitations imposed on them by the patriarchy, but beyond the limitations imposed on any human being by nature itself. After all, we don't have any data on women's (or men's) hap-

piness in 1870.

The women of Generation X deserve to sleep well. But to rest easy, they have to resolve some cognitive dissonance. They had unrealistic expectations (crucially, not just of being a woman today but of being an adult in any place or time). Yet they weathered, mostly with tremendous resilience, the baby boomers' near-destruction of many of the institutions that did, in a brief period of post-war prosperity, make adulthood appear comparatively easy and womanhood appear headed for utopic exemption from not just the social structures of patriarchy but the aforementioned realities of time and space.

Meanwhile, millennial women like me should be intentional about resisting a different version of the same trap.

Kristen Roupenian's widely read *New Yorker* story "Cat Person" (12/11/17) is about a sexually experienced but romantically naïve college student named Margot who becomes infatuated with a 20-something man named Robert in a PG-rated way that finds its most exciting expression in texting. Margot sleeps with Robert despite her lack of either sexual desire or affection for him, then proceeds to display little self-awareness and no other-regard in ghosting him. In the end, he harasses her by text message, concluding with a single-word final text: "whore."

Margot was widely touted as a realistic depiction of millennial women, many of whom (per Lena Dunham's HBO hit) prefer to call themselves "Girls." And indeed, Roupenian's story picks up on the same bleakness and impotence that Dunham's show (which ends with

the protagonist Hannah Horvath as an isolated and resentful single mother) infamously illuminated.

If "Sex and the City" reflected nihilistic buoyancy, in which women could make shortsighted choices in pursuit of fun and still live happily ever after, since the simplicity of utopia was right around the corner, "Cat Person" and "Girls" reflect nihilistic fatalism, in which it doesn't matter what choices women make because they will end up degraded and unfulfilled regardless, since anything that isn't utopia might as well be hell.

These are different sides of the same unsophisticated, childish coin. Only now, instead of idealizing the portrayal of spoiled children that get everything at once, we are content to wallow in the depiction of sullen children who can be satisfied by nothing.

Maybe, instead, we millennials can vindicate Generation X by growing up, as they did, and accepting the inevitable optimization and prioritization of that decision. Maybe we can recognize that realism about time, space and biology must be considered part of, not in competition with, women's (and men's) ability to lead lives of great purpose and some joy.

Maybe we can have it all. Even (a little) sleep.

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Elizabeth Grace Matthew works in curriculum development and instruction at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia.

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# Passion Play

By Emily Stoddard

In the sacristy, I consider striking distance  
and the angles of whips.

How close would a Roman soldier need to be  
to solicit a gash? How close for a hairline of red?

Would the whip roll across the skin in one clear lick,  
or would it hiccup across the folds?

Did the son of the father have folds of skin,  
or was he polished tight by hard work  
like my father?

How different are the muscles of a carpenter  
from the muscles of a forester?

I decide on wide slashes—precise but hungry,  
as if the soldier had wanted to peel into the heart—

and apply the blood, a mix  
of karo syrup and red dye.

Like Jesus in Gethsemane, my father did not want to  
be Jesus. He said he wanted to be Peter.

The parish priest knew better: my father has never  
not wanted to be the hero.

So every year, he carries a cross through  
St. Isidore's, trailed by the screams

of parishioners: *Crucify him! Crucify him!*

He wears a crown of thorns he made from  
a wild honey locust, and better than ash, it leaves

a bloody mark on his forehead.

We raise his body up on the cross he built  
himself from a redwood tree.

My mother makes the same joke about trying  
to live with him when he thinks he's God,

and we practice his lines so much they become  
a new kind of family prayer.

I say: *Father, if it is your will—*  
My brothers cry back: *Take this cup from me!*

I say: *The reason I was born,*  
*the reason I came into this world—*

and my brothers call:  
*is to testify to the truth!*

My father is known for his wail:  
*My God! My God! Why have you forsaken me?*

But I covet the lines where Jesus sounds lonely  
and surprised by it:

*Peter, are you asleep?*  
*Could you not watch one hour with me?*

As lonely as anyone who has ever tried to be human.

Every year, I find a little more of the broken  
alien inside of him—

*My kingdom is not of this world.*  
*If it were, my subjects would be fighting*

*to save me from being handed over.*  
*As it is, my kingdom is not from here.*

Every year, I want more passion,  
less resurrection.

Every year, the slashes get wider.

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Emily Stoddard is a poet and writer living in Grand Rapids, Mich. Her writing appears in *Tupelo Quarterly*, *Tinderbox Poetry Journal*, *The Baltimore Review*, *Whitefish Review* and elsewhere; [www.emilystoddard.com](http://www.emilystoddard.com).



## The unrealized Los Angeles revolution

By Sean Dempsey

AP Photo/Harold Filian

**SET THE NIGHT ON FIRE  
L.A. IN THE SIXTIES**  
MIKE DAVIS  
AND JON WIENER



**Set the Night on Fire**  
L.A. in the Sixties  
By Mike Davis and  
Jon Wiener  
Verso Books  
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One of the pleasures of the recent film “Once Upon a Time...in Hollywood” is its tour of late-1960s Los Angeles, as Quentin Tarantino, the director, takes viewers on a journey from classic restaurants like Musso & Frank and El Coyote to the backlots of a declining studio system to the city’s streets filled with the children of the counterculture. While attending to historical detail, the film works more as a myth or, as its title implies, a fairy tale about a city on the brink of a new, but not necessarily better, era.

The new book by the historians

Mike Davis and Jon Wiener, *Set the Night on Fire: L.A. in the Sixties*, similarly takes readers on a picaresque voyage around Los Angeles during the “long sixties” (1960-1973). But instead of watering holes and the Playboy Mansion, our guides to the city take us to college campuses at the height of the antiwar movement, to the streets of Watts on the brink of uprising, and to the churches and meeting halls where the fight for gay rights began.

In propulsive prose and vivid historical vignettes, Davis and Wiener narrate a near-mythic history of radical Los Angeles, a movement that they contend planted the seeds for an as-yet-unrealized revolution. Where Tarantino’s film represents an elegy for the passing of an older, more conservative version of Los Angeles, Davis and Wiener see in the same decade a promise to be fulfilled.

Readers would be hard-pressed to find better guides for a tour of leftist

Los Angeles. *City of Quartz*, Mike Davis’s classic (if unclassifiable) history of Los Angeles, first published three decades ago, reads like social history filtered through the febrile imagination of a sci-fi novelist. This was clearly no accident, as two of Davis’s subjects, Carey McWilliams, the leftist author of several works of Southern California history, and Philip K. Dick, the Los Angeles-based writer who is most remembered for his dystopian visions of the city in the film “Blade Runner” (1982), were also clear inspirations.

Jon Wiener, an emeritus professor of history at U.C. Irvine and host of the podcast “Start Making Sense,” has written recently about our collective historical amnesia surrounding the Cold War, and there is clearly a similar call in this work to remember the witness of the radicals and other “working class heroes” that inhabit the pages of *Set the Night on Fire*. Together, Davis and Wiener have crafted a book that is both

encyclopedic and prophetic, scholarly and polemical. The omnivorous quality of the book makes it the most complete single volume on the history of radical politics in the city in any time period. But this very drive for a totalizing narrative comes at some cost.

Davis and Wiener's focus on the headlines of "the movement" means that they tread on some familiar historical ground. The 1965 Watts Uprising and the subsequent McCone Commission, as well as the Chicano Blowouts (1966-1968), in which student activists in East L.A. high schools walked out to protest discrimination in the Los Angeles Unified School District, have all been the subjects of numerous historical works over the years. In these and many other discussions, Davis and Wiener do not add anything new to these important histories beyond the power of polemic and creative juxtaposition.

This attention to "above the fold" history also informs the book's treatment of religion. Catholic Los Angeles appears only fleetingly, and somewhat predictably, in *Set the Night on Fire*. Davis and Wiener devote an entire chapter to the now-iconic controversy surrounding Cardinal James Francis McIntyre, the long-serving (1948-1970) archbishop of Los Angeles, and Sister Corita Kent of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (I.H.M.). For the uninitiated, a brief recap: In 1967, the I.H.M. sisters, a community of Catholic religious women known especially for their work in education, most notably at Immaculate Heart College in Los Angeles, responded to a mandate of the Second Vatican Council for renewal and modernization by proposing a series of reforms that

quickly drew McIntyre's ire.

Among these reforms were the abandonment of the traditional habit, a relaxation of communal prayer, and a new emphasis on work outside of Catholic institutions. McIntyre, already vehemently opposed to the scope and speed of the council's changes to the liturgy and religious life, ordered the sisters to cease and desist, invoking his authority as bishop and relying on his considerable influence in the Catholic hierarchy in the United States. For Davis and Wiener, little has changed, and their analysis would have benefited from finding a fresh angle on a well-worn tale.

*Set the Night on Fire* also raises questions due to its rather rigid focus on Los Angeles as the setting of its dramatic action. In recent years, urban historians have become increasingly interested in cities not so much as the site of historical events, but as contested places where political, cultural and economic forces collide. Davis himself has contributed to the rich vein of inquiry in *Magical Urbanism* (2001) and *Planet of Slums* (2005), but a strong sense of the international dimensions of the movements described in *Set the Night on Fire* is largely lacking.

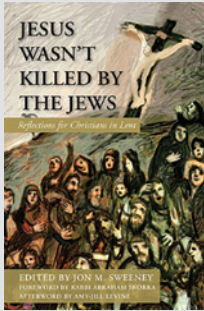
Davis and Wiener's attention to the movement's public actions, from street protests and civil violence to school walkouts and radical political advocacy, also runs the risk of erasing quieter forms of resistance and struggle. My own research on Los Angeles has revealed that the city's many churches and other faith communities were also centers of these less obvious, but no less vital, struggles for dignity and equality among the city's most marginalized citizens.

There is also the crucial question of whether or not what Davis and Wiener describe over the course of more than 800 pages was a "movement" at all. The U.C. Berkeley historian Mark Brilliant has argued that the civil rights movement in California, especially in Los Angeles, was broad and multifaceted, encompassing not only African Americans, but Chinese Americans, Japanese Americans and Mexican Americans (among many others). But efforts to dismantle legalized racism often ran on parallel tracks, says Brilliant, as each group faced distinctive challenges in their struggle for equality. For reasons ranging from the logistical to the cultural and historical, solidarity across communities of color and with progressive whites has often proven to be more of an aspiration than a reality in Los Angeles.

Despite these flaws, *Set the Night on Fire* will be an indispensable resource for scholars and activists interested in radical politics in Los Angeles for years to come. Indeed, Davis and Wiener call for a new generation to "enlarge and revise" the histories recounted in the book and, in the process, bring a new, more just Los Angeles into being.

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 128p \$19

### A challenge to Christians

The historic role of Christian anti-Semitism in the bloody pogroms that devastated Jewish communities for centuries has been documented and at least partially acknowledged by the Christian community. Yet each Lent, a veritable shudder of anguish runs through various Jewish groups and among those Christians aware of just how deep the sentiment of anti-Jewishness is rooted and embedded in Christianity, including the New Testament itself.

All of this calls for deeper awareness among Christians—of all denominations—and the resolve to address, redress and remove this stain from our midst and hearts. The responsibility for doing so has yet to be fully embraced or implemented in Christian communities.

*Jesus Wasn't Killed by the Jews*, with its arresting title, is meant to arouse Christians, both their pastors and congregations, to the agonies and injustices perpetrated against Jews in the past and present, and to do so by examining the scriptural and historic roots of this un-Christlike hatred.

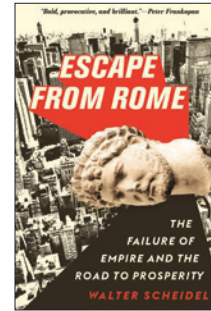
The book is too short to do so itself, considering the enormity and import of the task. It includes 14 relatively brief articles/essays, with a foreword and afterword, by competent, even renowned, scholars, but

does not always achieve the requisite depth needed because of the book's brevity. Its editor, Jon M. Sweeney, rightly invites readers to “read beyond what you discover here,” and there is a smattering of footnotes that hint at the remarkable literature on historic anti-Jewishness in the New Testament and subsequent Christian history, published before and after Vatican II's landmark declaration “*Nostra Aetate*” (1965).

Several critical areas of examination, touched on in more than one entry, have to do with the putative anti-Jewishness of the fourth Gospel, as well as the role of the Pharisees—misunderstood from earliest Christian times—and the subsequent murderous effect on Jews over the centuries. One of the Christian authors states baldly that “it is essential that we have a context for why the Gospel of John villainizes and even demonizes” the Jews.

In her on-point afterword, Amy-Jill Levine writes that the book's essays are meant to “open points of conversation.” She then challenges readers to “face the textual problems”; to provide guidance for priests, preachers and seminararians concerning them; to study the creative state of Judaism at the time of Jesus and the subsequent development of Rabbinic Judaism; and to deal with the ongoing anti-Jewish bias in our theology, politics and human relationships. If this book encourages even the slightest advance in those directions, it will deserve “to be praised at the city gates.”

Patrick Jordan is managing editor emeritus of *Commonweal*.



**Escape From Rome**  
 By Walter Scheidel  
 Princeton University Press  
 696p \$35

### Empire's end

The fall of Rome in 476 C.E. marked the end of antiquity and ushered in the Middle Ages. Although the Eastern Empire would persevere for another millennium, the West would never be the same. The world the Roman Empire built and maintained for five centuries evaporated almost overnight and left behind a highly fragmented, contentious and economically devastated Europe. But as Walter Scheidel argues in *Escape From Rome: The Failure of Empire and the Road to Prosperity*, out of the Empire's ashes rose modernity.

Scheidel begins his book, a sweeping academic survey comparing empires and eras, with the claim that the best thing the Roman Empire ever did was to “fall and go away.” This feels counterintuitive at first: What about the Empire's contributions to engineering, literature, language, law and economic development? Scheidel does not necessarily discount those Roman innovations, but he saves his examination of them for the epilogue. Rather, most of his study is centered around demonstrating that the lack of empire in Western Europe allowed the conditions for modernity to arise, or what he calls “The (Second) Great Divergence,” the first one after 476 A.D.

To build his thesis, Scheidel re-



lies on counterfactuals (were there any candidates for a new empire to establish itself in Europe?), comparative analysis of other long term empires, notably in China, and an examination of the benefits of highly fractured European states sharing a small geographic footprint.

Each of these points takes up several chapters and includes twists and turns that are more geared toward fellow academic historians than the average reader. How much influence, for example, did Europe's relative isolation from the Eurasian steppe have on state formation, and would Europeans still have discovered the New World if they switched places with China? These sections are difficult to follow, even in their major lines of thought.

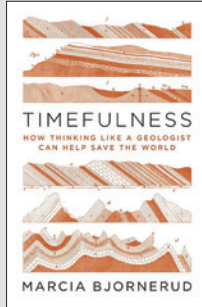
Despite these shortcomings, *Escape From Rome* makes bold claims about the nature of empire and the roots of the modern world and backs them up with thoughtful analysis. At its core, Scheidel's thesis is strikingly logical: competitive friction creates progress.

As Scheidel demonstrates, the European experience has been a unique one. After Rome, no single empire was ever able to assert itself on a similar level. Factionalism and competition between states led to innovation, advancement and modernity.

Roman legacies are still worth studying and celebrating, but if Scheidel is right, the fall of the Western Empire did more to create the modern world than the Empire itself ever did.

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Dominic Lynch publishes the website *The New Chicagoan*.



**Timefulness:**  
How Thinking Like a  
Geologist Can Help  
Save the World  
By Marcia Bjornerud  
Princeton University  
Press  
224p \$24.95

### Geological virtues

Geologists and theologians have a complex relationship in modernity. In the 19th century, theories of deep geological time radically reconfigured theologians' understandings of the earth's age, with implications for the (un)reliability of the Bible as a scientific record. Now, in the first few decades of the 21st century, geology has once again thrown down a gauntlet to theology, raising the question of the deleterious impact of industrial humanity's activities on the planet's earth systems.

When I began reading Marcia Bjornerud's *Timefulness*, I expected a geology-forward argument about the Anthropocene—the highly fetishized, purported new epoch on the Geologic Time Scale under consideration by the International Commission on Stratigraphy. What I found instead was a set of reflections more befitting a theologian than the arguments I had anticipated.

*Timefulness* is, for Bjornerud, a quality of attunement; an exhortation to a type of virtuous relationship to the natural world that contradicts the current “pervasive, stubborn, and dangerous temporal illiteracy in society” and a shorthand term for the shifting perspectives on the natural world that geology has opened up to modern minds.

Bjornerud takes the reader on a tour de force of geology that explains how the contemporary earth sciences help with what religiously inclined readers might call the task of theological anthropology: a consideration of the world beyond humans, the world with humans, and the forces far beyond that shape us all.

This is, frankly, the most poetic rendering of geology I have read since Darwin's *Origin of Species*. Yet Bjornerud has a temporal advantage here—namely, in her diagnosis that “interpreting the Earth has always been deeply entangled with our self-perception as humans and our cherished stories about our relationship to the rest of creation.”

Bjornerud's skill as a professor and her craft as a writer are everywhere evident. As a professor, she regularly encounters challenges from students who resist the idea that the earth is more than 6,000 years old; with both rigor and generosity she opens up other worlds for them and, by proxy, for us.

Read *Timefulness* for its captivating history of geologic science, for the suggestion that “geology points a middle way between the sins of narcissistic pride in our importance and existential despair and our insignificance,” and for constructive visions of what a time-literate future could look like. The word “timefulness” may be more than just this book's title: It may be among the theological virtues that humanity needs to cultivate in the 21st century.

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Christiana Zenner is an associate professor of theology, science and ethics at Fordham University in New York.

## A thrilling allegory of faith

By John Anderson

*“Corpus Christi,”* starring Bartosz Bielenia as Father Tomasz, is about the amorphous nature of earthly redemption.

Two lines of dialogue at the start of the ferocious *“Corpus Christi”* come back and haunt the entire movie. “Each of us is a priest of Christ,” Father Tomasz (Lukasz Simlat) tells his congregation, the inmates of a Polish correctional facility for “youthful offenders.” Few of them seem young, and none seem a likely candidate for rehabilitation, with the possible exception of Daniel (Bartosz Bielenia), a young man with a calling but little hope. “No seminary will accept a convict like you,” Tomasz tells him. It is not exactly the Catholic version of a *Catch-22*, but the redemption Daniel hopes to find in Christ is indeed the same one being denied by his church.

*“Corpus Christi”* is not a critique of Catholicism, though; it may not even be a deliberately Catholic film. There seems right now to be pan-global fas-

ination with the conundrums of the priesthood among the makers of popular culture (see *“Fleabag,”* to cite one recent example), and *“CC”* fits the fashion. At the same time, the film’s director, Jan Komasa, presents us with something of a chewable paradox: Is the church, the conduit of salvation, denying Daniel salvation? Like several of his predecessors in Polish-Catholic cinema—Krzysztof Kieslowski (*“The Decalogue”*), for instance, or Pawel Pawlikowski (*“Ida”*)—Komasa puts faith in a contemporary frame, asking anew what we believe and why we believe it.

The film is also about the amorphous nature of earthly redemption. How will it come? What shape will it take? Poland’s entry for the Oscar this year, *“Corpus Christi”* is not just an allegory of faith, but also something of a thriller: Will Daniel be found out? To

explain: When he’s paroled to work in a sawmill owned by the mayor of a small village (Leszek Lichota), he decides to go AWOL, passing through the tiny town where, through a series of circumstances and some outright lying, he is mistaken for a priest. When the local pastor suffers a collapse, Daniel is drafted into full-time duty—which he embraces heart and soul.

In fact, Daniel—who renames himself *“Father Tomasz”*—has a gift for the ministry. After a few missteps that are rigorously scrutinized by the jaundiced sexton Lidia (Aleksandra Konieczna), he says a muscular Mass (modeled on his mentor’s delivery back at “juvie”) and exults in his blessing of the parishioners, heaving holy water into the air like a human geyser and delivering sermons that invigorate a spiritually damaged

community. As indicated by an oft-visited roadside memorial of flowers and photographs, seven local people were recently killed in a car crash. “Where’s the seventh victim?” asks Daniel, looking at the six posted pictures. That man was the killer, the grieving survivors tell him. He was drunk. He killed them on purpose. Their grief is crazed; the widow has been not just ostracized, but terrorized.

Daniel makes it his mission to save them from themselves, including Lidia, whose son died in that crash, and Lidia’s daughter, Marta (Eliza Rycembel), who knows more than she is telling about the crash, and with whom Daniel will have

a head-on romantic collision.

Daniel/Tomasz also has to save himself, which is no mean feat, his new mission being founded on a lie and as such—in a movie about salvation—must come tumbling down. Or does it? As much as we can see from the start that Daniel will find the opportunity to serve in the position for which he seems to have such a natural aptitude, so do we expect him to be found out. But it is to the credit of the writer Mateusz Pacewicz—and Komasa, and the utterly convincing Belenia, whose face could have inspired Goya—that little which happens is what we expect, or necessarily want; but the film will resonate persistently.

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John Anderson is a television critic for *The Wall Street Journal* and a contributor to *The New York Times*.

## Saying goodbye to ‘BoJack’

“BoJack Horseman,” the Netflix cartoon about the depressed, horse-headed celebrity, set itself the nearly impossible task of being a hopeful comedy about chronic alcoholic relapse. For a long time it seemed like the hope came from BoJack’s (voiced by Will Arnett) recurring attempts to change his life: his repeated brief stints of sobriety, the resentful care he offered his abusive mother, his TV comeback, his apologies. But the show has frequently used BoJack’s former fame as a sitcom star to hint at the nature of relapse, the life where nothing works for very long.

The Sisyphean sitcom star rolls that rock of personal change up the hill, grunting and sweating all episode long, and somehow it has rolled back down by the time the theme song plays. Except in real life one thing does change: With each attempt at recovery, people trust you less; and you trust yourself *much* less.

The final season of “BoJack” gives many of its characters endings about as happy as they can manage. The most interesting secondary storyline might be Diane’s. Voiced by Alison Brie, the freelance pop journalist Diane Nguyen spends much of this final season trying to write a memoir.

Diane wanted her struggles to mean something—to be, as one episode’s title puts it, “Good Damage.” But Diane’s pain isn’t useful; it doesn’t make her, for example, a more compassionate person. She ditches the memoir and writes a fluffy YA series (“Ivy Tran, Food Court Detective”). She hopes that the series will help other weird kids, and it does help her connect with her boyfriend’s angry teenage son, but these positive effects aren’t why she’s writing it. She does what she’s capable of doing and that’s all.

In the final episode, BoJack’s friend Todd tries to encourage him; but all his exhortations to further effort are either depressing or dumb, like all the encouragements people offer you during relapse. And so BoJack and Diane end their series side by side in silence. They don’t know what any of it means. They care too much about their feelings and completely lack a vocabulary of right and wrong. But in a show that has always depicted the undertow of the past and the unbearable pressure to self-make your better future, they are finally looking only at the present moment; they’re at rest.

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Eve Tushnet, *contributing writer*.



# Were You There?

Readings: Mt 21:1-11; Is 50:4-7; Ps 22; Phil 2:6-11; Mt 26:14-27:66

At services during Holy Week, “Were You There When They Crucified My Lord?” will be widely sung. Originally sung by African slaves, this hymn is beautifully somber, professing the deep faith of people who were denigrated and dehumanized like Christ. As we listen to Matthew’s Passion, we should consider who we might be in the narrative. Who was there in Jesus’ time of need?

In the Gospel that opens Palm Sunday Mass, Jesus enters Jerusalem and is greeted by crowds who spread their cloaks on the ground, waving and throwing branches at his feet. They shout “Hosanna” (“save us” in Hebrew), praising Jesus and foreshadowing his salvific act on the cross.

In the verses immediately before those we read today, an unnamed woman anoints Jesus’ head with oil. Like the crowds, her actions acknowledge the significance of Jesus’ impending sacrificial death (Mt 26:6-13). Although the disciples criticize her for being wasteful, Jesus praises her for ministering to him and anointing him as he nears death. One can see parallels to the sacrament of anointing of the sick.

On Palm Sunday, the reading of the Passion is often shared among multiple voices, offering an excellent opportunity for the congregation to reflect on who supported Jesus during his time of need. As the Passion unfolds, the apostles prepare the Passover meal and share the first Eucharist. Yet despite their closeness to Jesus, they do not stand by him in his suffering. Judas betrays Jesus, kissing him as a signal for his arrest. Peter and the sons of Zebedee, the inner circle of the disciples, join Jesus at Gethsemane. But while Jesus is praying, expressing grief and anxiety, three times they fall asleep, frustrating Jesus and failing to offer him comfort. After Jesus’ arrest, Peter fulfills Jesus’ prophecy by denying him three times, saying, “I do not know the man” (Mt 26:72, 74). While presenting the disciples’ abandonment of Jesus, Matthew also shows Peter weeping after his denial, indicating the need for his repentance and reconciliation.

Jewish leaders and Roman officials orchestrate Jesus’ trial and sentencing, most notably Pontius Pilate, who questions Jesus, recognizes his innocence and symbolically washes his hands to absolve himself of responsibility.

*Many women followed Jesus, ministering to him. (Mt 27:55)*



## PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

What can we learn from the women and men who served Jesus?

How should we grapple with the portrait of the apostles in the Gospel?

How can Jesus’ diverse supporters serve as models for leadership?

The crowds are unrelenting in their calls for Jesus’ death, and Jesus is mocked by soldiers, passersby and the bandits who are crucified alongside him.

Matthew mentions other people present during Jesus’ suffering. A passerby, Simon of Cyrene, helps Jesus carry his cross. Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph and other women witness the Passion. A Roman centurion proclaims Jesus was the Son of God. Joseph of Arimathea requests Jesus’ body in order to bury him properly. Mary Magdalene and Mary keep vigil at Jesus’ tomb.

The apostles are nowhere to be found at Jesus’ final moments. Despite the positive associations with them elsewhere in biblical and church tradition, today’s Gospel presents a troubling view of these men and demonstrates that at this critical moment, countless women and faithful witnesses sustained the community when the apostles fled. While the Passion invites us to be self-reflective, it also challenges us to examine our leadership structures and recognize important models of faith in our midst without being limited by clericalism. The Gospel provides a biblical foundation for integrating women and the laity into church leadership, creating an inclusive model that represents the body of the church.

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# Emptiness Speaks Volumes

Readings: Acts 10:34-43; Ps 118; Col 3:1-4 or 1 Cor 5:6-8; Jn 20:1-9

Happy Easter! Christ is risen! Easter is the most important day of our liturgical year. Today we celebrate Jesus' willingness to die for our sins and his victory over death. Jesus' resurrection is a foundational Christian belief. But, what if you believe in the resurrection but don't understand it? You are not alone. The Gospels reveal the very human responses to this mystery of faith: confusion, fear and sadness that eventually give way to awe and belief.

In John's Gospel, Mary Magdalene visits Jesus' tomb alone, finding the stone removed and Jesus' body gone. Upset and confused, Mary alerts Peter and the beloved disciple, an unnamed follower of Christ, and they run to the site, showing their fervor and concern. John highlights the race between Peter and the disciple, which could allude to a rivalry between them. John states clearly that the beloved disciple arrives at the tomb first, but Peter enters first. When the disciple enters, he believes right away when he sees the empty tomb and burial cloths. While Mary, Peter and the disciple try to grapple with what has happened, John underscores that "they did not yet understand the Scripture that he had to rise from the dead" (Jn 20:9).

*Mary of Magdala came to the tomb early in the morning and saw the stone removed. (Jn 20:1)*

## PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

How can you show your gratitude for the resurrection?

How can you continue your positive Lenten practices throughout the year?

Where do you encounter Christ in your daily life?

John's resurrection account lacks a verbal cue to tell Jesus' followers that he had risen. The other Gospels are more explicit about this detail. Matthew describes an angel telling Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of James and Joseph that Jesus had risen (Mt 28:1-6). Mark describes a young man at the tomb informing Mary Magdalene, Salome and Mary the mother of James that Jesus had been raised (Mk 16:1-8). Luke describes a large group (Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James and other women) who encounter two men, later described as angels, who inform them of Jesus' resurrection (Lk 24:1-10).

John, however, heightens the mystery by excluding a verbal declaration. Instead, he depicts the emptiness of the tomb and the empty linen wrappings as a visual communication of the resurrection. Jesus' followers must infer their meaning. Although today the empty tomb and linens are clear signs of the resurrection, at the time, their significance was not fully understood.

Fortunately, we have the 50-day Easter season to hear about Jesus' resurrection appearances through Gospel readings that help to clarify and reaffirm the resurrection. For instance, after Peter and the disciple depart, Jesus appears to Mary and gives her verbal confirmation of his resurrection (Jn 20:11-18). Similarly, Jesus makes several other appearances to his followers and shows his wounds from the crucifixion as evidence of his death and resurrection. What might be difficult to understand on Easter Sunday can become clearer for us throughout the Easter season.

As we celebrate this season, we pray for clarity, offer prayers of thanksgiving and bask in the joy of the Easter miracle. Alleluia!

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

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# The Call to Motherhood

*To mother means to nurture relationships*

By Danielle Bean



One recent afternoon, I stepped into my kitchen and wondered where everyone was. I did a quick inventory in my mind: Some were at basketball practice, some were at work, others were with friends.

I was alone in my house.

I looked around surprised. As an at-home working mom, there have been precious few moments where I have found myself alone in the past 25 years. And yet, with grown children who are married, working and away at college, and with children at home engaged in pursuits of their own, this kind of thing happens more and more.

I love it, and I don't. I find myself with unexpected pockets of time and space where I used to have none, and I struggle sometimes to know what I should do now, who I should be now. Like the awkward way my arms used to hang at my sides at a party without a baby in tow, my own life can feel awkward. There is too much time. There is too much space.

When I was a young mom, I grappled with that identity. It was something much bigger but also much smaller than anything I had ever been. Motherhood was an all-encompassing thing, and yet also a hidden thing. There were no more accolades like grades in school or acknowledgment at work. There were only clingy human beings, complete exhaustion and an occasional pat on the head from the

world at large: "What do you do? Are you just a mom?"

I was not just a mom. Being a mother took everything I had and then some. It was what I did all day, every day, but it was not all that I was.

Through the years, I have come to see the word "mother" in a different way. Where I once saw "mother" as limiting, I have come to understand it as expansive. "Mother" is something we women do. And God made us for it.

Women who have children and raise them are mothers. But women who love their husbands, nieces, nephews, neighbors, co-workers, students, family and friends are mothers, too. "Mother" is, in fact, who we are. Thanks be to God for mothering.

St. Edith Stein once wrote, "The woman's soul is fashioned as a shelter in which other souls may unfold."

Our feminine capacity to connect with others, to see them as they are, to provide a nurturing space where they can feel uniquely known and loved, to be sensitive to their needs and respond to them in personal ways is our greatest gift.

But women are not meant to be "just mothers," we might protest. We are meant to be teachers, scientists, artists, politicians and chief executive officers! Of course, we can be all of these things, but it is a sexist world that tells women that mothering is somehow beneath us or that in

order to be successful we must hide our hearts.

To mother means to nurture relationships, the very things that give meaning to our lives and our work. If you have been loved by any kind of mother in this world—if a woman has seen you, nurtured you, known you and loved you, you know its worth. It is no small thing to be seen and known and loved; it is everything.

So what now? Is it time to step into a clichéd persona as an empty-nester, wiping away tears with my apron strings? Or, with my grown children, my husband, my friends and co-workers, is it time to step more deeply into the expansive work of motherhood, the limits of which I have not yet seen?

Whatever work I might do and whatever goals I might accomplish in the days to come, I know this much: I am going to keep on seeing the people God places in my life. I am going to keep on knowing them and loving them to the best of my ability. I am going to keep on being just a mom.

Danielle Bean's newest book is *Giving Thanks and Letting Go: Reflections on the Gift of Motherhood*.

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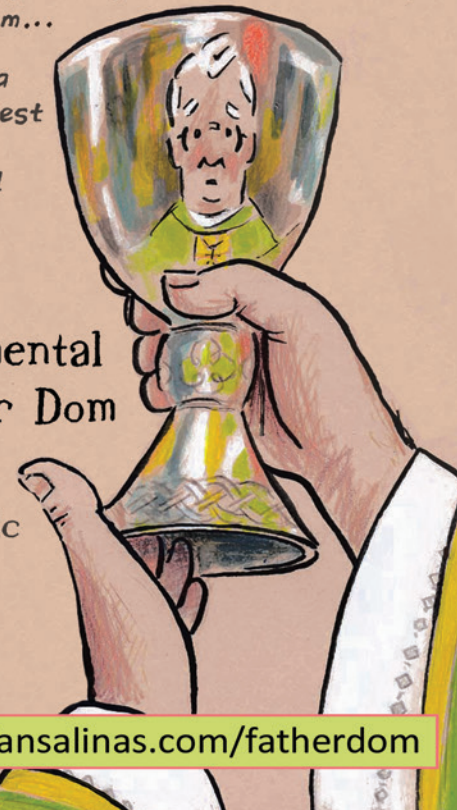
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