

America

APRIL 29, 2019

THE JESUIT REVIEW OF FAITH AND CULTURE

CELEBRATING 110 YEARS

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A Fire in Paris

Editor's Note: The day before this issue went to press, we watched on our newsroom monitors the devastating fire at the Cathedral of Notre-Dame in Paris. As of this writing, the fire has been extinguished and, while the cause and the full extent of the damage are unknown, much of this treasure of our Christian patrimony lies in ashes. Thanks be to God, no one was killed.

How do we make sense of such an event? Yesterday, a member of our editorial staff made an attempt. I share it here, a reflection by a young man about this 800-year-old symbol of our enduring faith.

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

•••

I watched Notre-Dame Cathedral burn with a sinking feeling in the pit in my stomach and tears welling up in my eyes. The spire has fallen. The fire is raging through the cathedral still, and we do not yet know the extent of the damage.

The first time I traveled abroad, I went on a pilgrimage to the Vatican with my high school youth group. But first we stopped in Paris. There I was, 16 and sweating on a hot July day, staring up at the rose window on the building's facade that I had seen before only in pictures. I attended my first Mass in a foreign country and made my confession (in English) to a gentle priest with a thick French accent. This was a first indication to me that my Catholicism was global, beautiful and rooted in history.

I learned that the construction of the cathedral began in the early 12th century and would take nearly 200 years to be finished. The men who

laid the first stones would never see the finished fruits of their labors. I remember wondering if I would have the humility to contribute to such an endeavor, or if any of us still did.

Now is a time for grieving. Notre-Dame is a French Catholic treasure that belonged to more than the French and the Catholic Church. It evokes thoughts of God in the religious and nonreligious alike. Its flying buttresses are a marker of architectural innovation, and its spires and stained glass are icons of the Gothic era. And it has borne witness to the joys and tragedies of Paris for over eight centuries, outlasting kings and commanders, wars and revolution.

I returned to Paris in 2016, hoping to marvel again at the hunk of stone that grounded me in my capital-C church and to peer through the rose window that lifted my eyes toward heaven—but historic flooding on the Seine had shut down most of the city, the cathedral included. I had to settle for a view from Shakespeare & Co. across the Île de la Cité, thinking I would have another chance someday to walk inside and pray.

During the last two weeks of Lent, many Catholic churches around the world cover up their religious icons and images, including their crucifixes. Catholics, known for our extravagant use of imagery in prayer and liturgy, turn away from it in the holiest week of the year. In penance and mourning, our senses suffer along with the suffering Lord.

The crucifix that hangs prominently above the altar in my parish church was covered by a large purple cloth last evening for Palm Sunday, shrouded during our observance of Passiontide. The congregation stood,

listening to the reading of the Passion story without any visual reminder of Jesus' death on the cross. The implication, our priest explained, is that even hearing or reading about a crucified God is enough for our imaginations.

That lesson clicked today after I saw the spire fall from the top of the cathedral. I had to turn off the livestream. It does not take a pious person to draw the connection of a bloody, broken and dying Jesus to an all-consuming fire destroying one of the world's most beloved and iconic churches. The floor plan of the cathedral is cruciform—meant to resemble the cross on which Christ's body hung. Our Lady, who stood weeping at her son's crucifixion, surely weeps for the cathedral dedicated to her name.

Notre-Dame has survived the deliberate destruction of the French Revolution and the indiscriminate bombings of World War II. Yet this fire has the potential to do more damage than the cathedral has ever seen before. Regardless, it will rise again—even if, like Christ, it bears the wounds of the past.

But the view of Easter Sunday is never murkier than through the haze of Good Friday.

 Zac Davis
Twitter: @zacdayvis.

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 americamagazine.org on 4/15/19.*



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AP Photo/Oded Ballity

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu visits the Ha'tikva market in Tel Aviv, Israel, on April 2. Netanyahu is preparing for a fifth term as his Likud Party emerged as winners in the country's parliamentary election.

Cover: The Nineveh Plains below the Rabban Hormizd Monastery near Alqosh, Iraq. (Kevin Clarke)

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What are your favorite pilgrimage sites?

Our readers told us that their favorite pilgrimage sites in the United States and Canada include the basilica at the University of Notre Dame, in Indiana, the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe in La Crosse, Wis., and Cataldo Mission in northern Idaho. Multiple respondents said they had simply never considered going on a domestic pilgrimage.

Readers also expressed interest in international pilgrimages, with 38 percent saying they would like to go on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. El Camino de Santiago was another popular choice, drawing 26 percent of respondents. Overall, 90 percent of respondents said they had already been on a pilgrimage—abroad or within the United States.

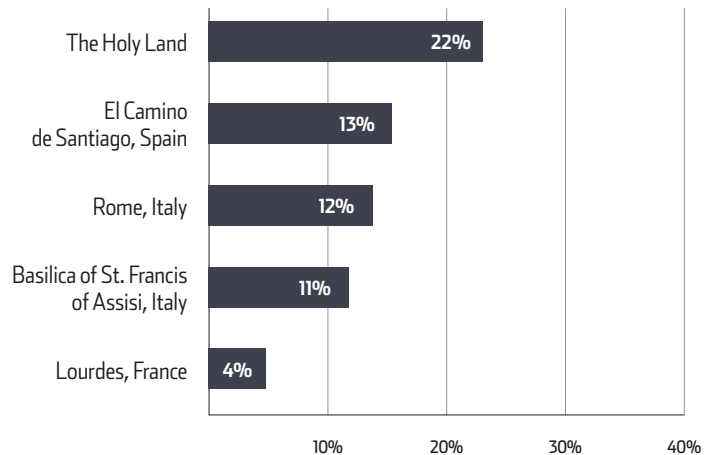
Maria Nowotny of Queensbury, N.Y., has been to Rome and the Basilica of St. Francis in Assisi. “I visited primarily religious sites and had an experience

that could be described as close to a pilgrimage or a self-directed pilgrimage,” she wrote.

She said, “When you arrive in Assisi, you’ll find that your soul is already there waiting for you.”

Other respondents reported how travel to other sites has enriched their spiritual lives. “As part of World Youth Day, I went to Poland,” said David Uhl of Seattle. “The part of the pilgrimage that I found the most powerful was not the formal World Youth Day experience. It was the day we went to Auschwitz death camp, taking in that horrendous moment in human history and remembering the individuals that died there, including Catholic saints. Where hope came in was going immediately from there to the Basilica of Divine Mercy near Krakow.”

The most popular pilgrimage sites visited abroad



A Graceful Close

Re “Canada Confronts Loss of Thousands of Christian Places of Worship,” by Michael Swan (4/15): Planning for the closure or consolidation of churches is definitely the way to go. Holding on for the sake of holding on is not. I worked with many rural parishes in Kansas that had served their purpose for a century and could no longer maintain aged buildings or gather much of a congregation. Yet trying to keep the doors open no matter what was their agenda. It took much pastoral work and grief to bring churches’ lifespans to a gracious, graceful close.

Jeanne Devine

A Hero to Me

Re “The Iron Nun’s Story,” by Madonna Buder, S.F.C.C. (3/18): I thoroughly enjoyed reading the article by Sister Buder. I am a priest who has run over 50 marathons over the years and appreciate her joys and challenges. Along with Sister Marion Irvine, the oldest qualifier for the women’s Olympic marathon trials in 1984, she is a hero to me.

(Rev.) David R. Bruning

Toledo, Ohio

An Incomplete Gesture

The only thing missing from Eve Tushnet’s “The Case for Public Penance” (3/4) is a recognition of the hierarchy’s failure to acknowledge that they have sinned against the people of God as a whole. Yes, recompense for individual victims must be paid; but without atonement to the entire flock, the gesture is incomplete.

Colleen Fay

Mount Rainier, Md.

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

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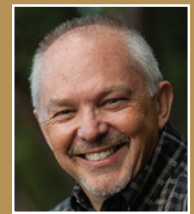
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At Its Core, the Death Penalty Is Indefensible

In March, Gov. Gavin Newsom of California imposed a moratorium on the use of capital punishment in that state, which has the highest population on death row (737 inmates) in the Western Hemisphere. The Democrat also ordered the dismantling of the state's gas chamber; any future governor who seeks to restart the execution process will have the grisly task of procuring the equipment to do it.

Meanwhile, the U.S. Supreme Court is bedeviled by never-ending questions about capital punishment that underscore the practice's capriciousness and cruelty. This winter the court refused to hear the case of an inmate in Alabama who had been denied the presence of a Muslim imam instead of a Christian chaplain in the execution chamber. In a 5-to-4 vote, the court said that the prisoner had failed to meet a state deadline for such requests. He was put to death by lethal injection on Feb. 8. But in late March, the court voted 7-to-2 to block an execution in Texas because officials there did not allow the inmate's Buddhist spiritual adviser to be present in the execution chamber. Unfortunately, Texas responded by banning all clergy from the execution chamber (which is the policy of most states).

And on April 1, in another 5-to-4 vote, the court ruled that the Eighth Amendment's prohibition of cruel and unusual punishment should not prevent the execution of an inmate in Missouri who said that a rare medical condition would cause him excruciating pain upon receiving a lethal injection.

These moves toward speeding up the execution process came after the Supreme Court narrowed the scope

of the death penalty over the past couple of decades, abolishing it for crimes other than murder, crimes committed before the age of 18 and crimes committed by those deemed "mentally retarded." The court has also wrestled with the question of racial bias in the application of the death penalty, though it has focused on jury selection and has pointedly declined to rule that the execution chamber is irredeemably tainted by racism.

Death penalty opponents have clearly failed to make a convincing case that the practice itself is unconstitutional. Even when the Supreme Court imposed a moratorium on executions in 1972 (by another 5-to-4 vote), it was on the grounds that the imposition of death sentences at the time was arbitrary and blatantly discriminatory against certain groups, not that the punishment was excessive. Still, the frequency of serious legal challenges since capital punishment was reinstated in 1976 demonstrates the difficulty—and the futility—of devising a perfect death penalty law.

Mr. Newsom has recognized this futility. "Our death penalty system has been, by all measures, a failure," the governor said in March. "It has provided no public safety benefit or value as a deterrent." Pope Francis went further when he revised the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* on this point last summer, declaring that the death penalty "is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person."

But Mr. Newsom's duty is not fulfilled. He should work toward a legislative repeal of the death penalty in California, and campaigns for repeal are needed in all 30 states that still have capital punishment on their books.

Polls suggest that though national support for the death penalty has fallen, it is still above a majority. (In California, narrow majorities voted down initiatives to abolish the death penalty in 2012 and 2016.) Governors and legislators who recognize the death penalty as immoral must do all they can to convince the public of this.

Those who work in the U.S. criminal justice system, whether as defenders of the accused, as prosecutors or as advocates for victims of violent crimes and their families, increasingly consider capital punishment ineffective as a deterrent, as well as unjust and prone to uncorrectable errors. Consequently, the number of death sentences imposed each year fell by more than 80 percent between 2000 and 2018, and the annual number of executions fell from 85 to 25 over the same period.

This is a welcome trend, but our revulsion at state executions does not disappear when they happen less frequently. Indeed, the great fluctuations in its use over the past half-century only prove how much its use is driven by individual judges and lawyers, trial venues, changes in popular opinion and prosecutors' personal judgments. The only rational—and moral—approach to the death penalty is to take its use off the table.

Pope Francis Signs Exhortation on Youth, 'Christ Lives'

On April 2, the Vatican released "Christ Lives," the third apostolic exhortation by Pope Francis. It arrives following the fall Synod of Bishops on Youth, the

Founded in 1909

Faith and Vocational Discernment, and it touches on the sexual abuse crisis in the church, migration and the effects of war and poverty on young people.

Throughout “Christ Lives,” Francis acknowledges the frustrations many young people experience and encourages young Catholics to “take risks, even if it means making mistakes.” He adds that the youth must maintain their “healthy restlessness,” because “true inner peace coexists with that profound discontent.” The church must engage the restlessness of young people—instead of viewing it as a threat or a drain on resources.

The letter also provides advice for those who work with young people. Francis encourages church leaders to make their institutions more inviting, adding that they “should provide young people with places they can make their own, where they can come and go freely, feel welcome and readily meet other young people, whether at times of difficulty and frustration, or of joy and celebration.”

This document is a gift to the church, especially in the United States, where the number of Catholics participating in church life continues to decline. Pope Francis has provided church leaders and Catholics with a document that can help us all to better accompany our Christian brothers and sisters around the world. The pope concludes the letter with humble words reminding young people that they are our church’s future. “Dear young people, my joyful hope is to see you keep running the race before you, outstripping all those who are slow or fearful. Keep running,” he says. “The Church needs your momentum, your intuitions, your faith. We need them! And when you arrive where we have not yet reached, have the patience to wait for us.”

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Pope Francis: Be wary of Hungary's right-wing populists

Europe's right-wing populists could try to exploit Pope Francis' trip to Romania at the end of May to embolden hostile attitudes toward migrants and refugees. But the pope can head them off by voicing a clear message of support for the tenet of welcoming the stranger.

Pope Francis is expected to celebrate an outdoor Mass on June 1 at the shrine of Our Lady of Csíksomlyó (a pilgrimage site called Șumuleu Ciuc in Romanian) for a crowd as big as 500,000. Although Francis will speak in Italian, his homily will be translated into Hungarian.

How is it that a pope is going to pray with Hungarians in the middle of Romania? Csíksomlyó is about 250 miles from the Hungarian border, but it is in Transylvania, a region that was part of Hungary until 1918. Each year on the Saturday before Pentecost, over 200,000 Hungarians from all over the world journey to the shrine; millions more watch the open-air Mass on TV. When Pope Francis steps out onto Csíksomlyó's outdoor altar and smiles, Hungarians all over the world will be smiling back.

Many Hungarians go to Csíksomlyó to pray and ask the Virgin Mary for help. But others have political motivations that flagrantly contradict Catholic social teaching. Csíksomlyó is a favorite for right-wing populists, who love the big crowds and intense religious feeling. Viktor Orbán, Hungary's autocratic prime minister, has been there many times, most recently in 2013. And Mr. Orbán's second in command, Zsolt Semjén, always has a seat reserved right in front of the altar.

Mr. Orbán's government is the leading voice in Europe against immigration. Under a law passed last year,

it is illegal for groups or organizations to assist undocumented migrants in Hungary or to help them gain legal status. Steve Bannon, a former presidential advisor and the brains behind the Trump campaign's America First nationalist populism, has set up shop in Hungary's capital, Budapest, and President Trump's wall on the southern border of the United States is an echo of the border fences topped with propaganda-blasting megaphones that Mr. Orbán began building in 2015 to keep out refugees. Mr. Orbán stands against the pope's frequent plea to build bridges rather than walls.

Is Pope Francis' trip to Csíksomlyó a sign that he is rethinking his stance toward right-wing, anti-immigrant populism? The answer is obviously no. But others have tried to exploit situations in which the pope merely greets visitors with civility. Remember his meeting with Kim Davis, the Kentucky county clerk who refused to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples? At Csíksomlyó, there will be thousands of anti-immigration activists and allies of Mr. Orbán who will want to claim support from the pope.

Pope Francis is a master of soft diplomacy. He has often used his personal example of humility to send subtle but potent political signals. This is one way he could approach his trip to Romania. In a way, he has already done this. Romania has a European-leaning president, Klaus Iohannis, whose personal invitation for the pope to visit was widely reported. Mr. Iohannis is a member of Romania's small ethnic German minority, and a Lutheran to boot. At a time when Britain's vote to leave the European

Union has left many wondering what good the Union has done, by humbly accepting Mr. Iohannis's gesture of hospitality, the pope has highlighted a success story of minority empowerment within the E.U. He also advanced the cause of ecumenism. All this, and he hasn't yet boarded his plane for Romania.

When he gets to Csíksomlyó, Pope Francis can—and should—send the clearest possible message that Hungary's right-wing populists do not have his support. The pope is likely to issue a statement against Mr. Orbán's anti-immigration laws, and he could use his homily to speak directly to Hungary's political leaders. But to make a bigger impact, he could also meet with members of the migrant-assistance groups that Mr. Orbán has targeted or driven underground. These include the Migrant Solidarity Group of Hungary, which has worked closely with Hungarian Catholic parishes. He could have a public meeting with migrants trying to make a home for themselves in Romania and Hungary. At Csíksomlyó, Pope Francis will have all the tools he needs to build on his track record of courage and compassion.

Whether Francis takes a soft or hard line, he will doubtless show the world what it means to serve in divisive times with humility, charity and openness. The whole world will surely notice, Viktor Orbán included.

Marc Roscoe Loustau is co-editor of *The Journal of Global Catholicism at the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Mass.* From 2009 to 2013, he lived in Csíksomlyó while conducting research as an anthropologist.
Twitter: @roscoe_loustau;
www.marcloustau.org.

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L.A. County jail begins a mental health renovation

By Jim McDermott

The county of Los Angeles, which has nearly double the inmate population of any other county in the United States, currently runs Men's Central Jail, a massive, 55-year-old, 4,300-bed institution ranked by Mother Jones in 2013 as one of the 10 worst places to be incarcerated in the United States.

The A.C.L.U. has described it as “a windowless dungeon in downtown L.A. that has been plagued by a long-entrenched culture of savage deputy-on-inmate violence.” In February, County Supervisor Janice Hahn called it “a decrepit, outdated facility inconsistent with human values and basic decency.” Her fellow supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas agreed, saying, “The state of Men's Central Jail is nothing short of a violation of fundamental human rights of those individuals.”

For years, the county has been planning to replace the facility. Last June county supervisors finally approved \$2.2

billion to build a replacement, with the notable amendment that the new facility would be designed with a focus on mental health and rehabilitation. The Los Angeles Times reported at the time that 70 percent of the county jail's population were physically or mentally ill.

One study last year found that even as the numbers in California's jails had been going down, the number of county jail inmates requiring psychotropic drugs had gone up by 25 percent. In March nearby Orange County announced it would no longer allow U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement to hold detainees in its jails because the mental health needs of its inmates has gone up an astonishing 40 percent over the last three years.

In February L.A. county supervisors decided to go a step further, voting to make the new facility—now known as the Mental Health Treatment Center—the responsibility not

Along with the adjacent Men's Central Jail, L.A. County's Twin Towers jail has been called one of the 10 worst sites of incarceration in the United States.

of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department but of the Department of Health Services. It will be staffed by the county's Department of Mental Health, with some L.A.S.D. deputies present to provide security.

Robert Garcia, assistant executive director of the Jesuit Restorative Justice Initiative, which provides pastoral care and does restorative justice work with inmates in the California prison system, welcomes the county's turn toward a mental health approach. Many of the criminal acts that landed county residents in the criminal justice system, he argues, are reflections of "traumatic experiences that inmates experienced in their youth and never got to deal with."

"It's trauma related to neglect, whether it be physical or emotional, or it could be abuse—physical, sexual or emotional," Mr. Garcia said.

"There's that saying, 'Hurt people hurt people.' A lot of the symptoms that we see—criminality, delinquency, even homelessness—are based on trauma that's displaced. So having a mental health focus would be a step in the right direction. It'll start treating the problem rather than symptoms."

At the same time, the idea of building a nearly 4,000-bed mental health treatment center is raising eyebrows. Dr. Ira Burnim, director of the Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law, which does policy, advocacy and litigation work around mental health issues nationally, calls the idea "insane, a very bad idea just preserving the status quo."

"Everyone seems to agree there are far too many people with mental illness in L.A. jails," said Dr. Burnim. But he says the fix is not more institutional beds for people with mental health problems. "They don't need to be there; they're only there because there aren't the services in the communities that are needed. There's this kind of inertia [in Los Angeles] that I don't entirely understand."

The county has been cagey so far about whether or not the construction contract officials signed in June requires them to build just one large facility. Supervisor Ridley-Thomas assured The Los Angeles Times, "There is

nothing here that is irreversible," but the actual details of the contract have not been revealed, and L.A. County officials did not respond to requests for comment.

If there is flexibility, Dr. Burnim suggested, the money would be better spent strengthening mental health services throughout the county, for example by creating more small, 16-beds-or-fewer crisis stabilization units for short-term care; "respite apartments," to which someone could come for a couple of weeks either to get help or to wait while a member of their family does so; or diversion centers, where people with mental health issues who are accused of offenses like criminal trespass can be brought for services instead of being sent to jail. "If they want bricks and mortar, I can think of an array of small storefront-type places, or apartments or maybe just family home types."

A key to success, though, is to locate options throughout the county. Collecting services or housing for people with mental health issues in one or just a few places, noted Dr. Burnim, "limits your freedom and flexibility. If you have a job across town or develop a relationship across town or want to live somewhere else, well, you can't. You have to stay in this one bed."

Dr. Burnim said the other major issue in Los Angeles is accountability. The "assertive community treatment" approach, in which teams of local service providers with different skills work together to help individuals, has become the standard of care. But Los Angeles, he finds, has "an almost totally unmanaged system: They provide guidance, they set up infrastructure, but they don't monitor performance intensively."

In his inaugural address, Governor Gavin Newsom imagined a "California for all," and since then he has already begun to make changes in the state's criminal justice system, instituting a moratorium on the death penalty and shifting responsibility for the state's juvenile justice system from the Department of Corrections to the Department of Health and Human Services. Los Angeles County could be poised to make its own paradigm shift in corrections practice and care. It remains to be seen whether its worthy aspirations will be married to effective practice.

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



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THE 'TWO CHURCHES' OF THE UNITED STATES

One is closing parishes, the other is standing-room only

There are 1,437 fewer parishes in the United States now than there were in 1971, according to the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate's "1964" blog, yet there are several states where dozens of Catholic churches have opened in the past few decades. Mark Gray, a researcher for CARA, recently wrote about the "two churches" phenomenon, in which "pastors in different parts of the country tend to be worried about different things (keeping the lights on vs. finding space for more pews and parking spaces)."

Twenty-five states have fewer parishes, as shown in the map below, but closings over the past half-century have been most frequent in the Northeast, with more than 1,000 in New York and Pennsylvania alone. Many of their churches were built in the 19th and early 20th centuries, often very near each other, to serve particular immigrant groups from European nations like Italy, Poland, Germany and Ireland. The demand for Italian-language Masses, for

example, has almost vanished as the descendants of these immigrants have moved out of large cities like New York and Philadelphia.

At the same time, the church cannot open parishes fast enough for the growing Catholic population in the South and West, which includes new generations of immigrants. By necessity, most of the new churches in these regions have more than 1,000 seats (most U.S. churches built before 1950 had fewer than 500 seats) and must offer several Masses each weekend to accommodate worshipers. The biggest increases in the number of parishes have been in Texas (293), Florida (165), and Arizona and New Mexico (121), which are counted together because the Diocese of Gallup crosses state lines.

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

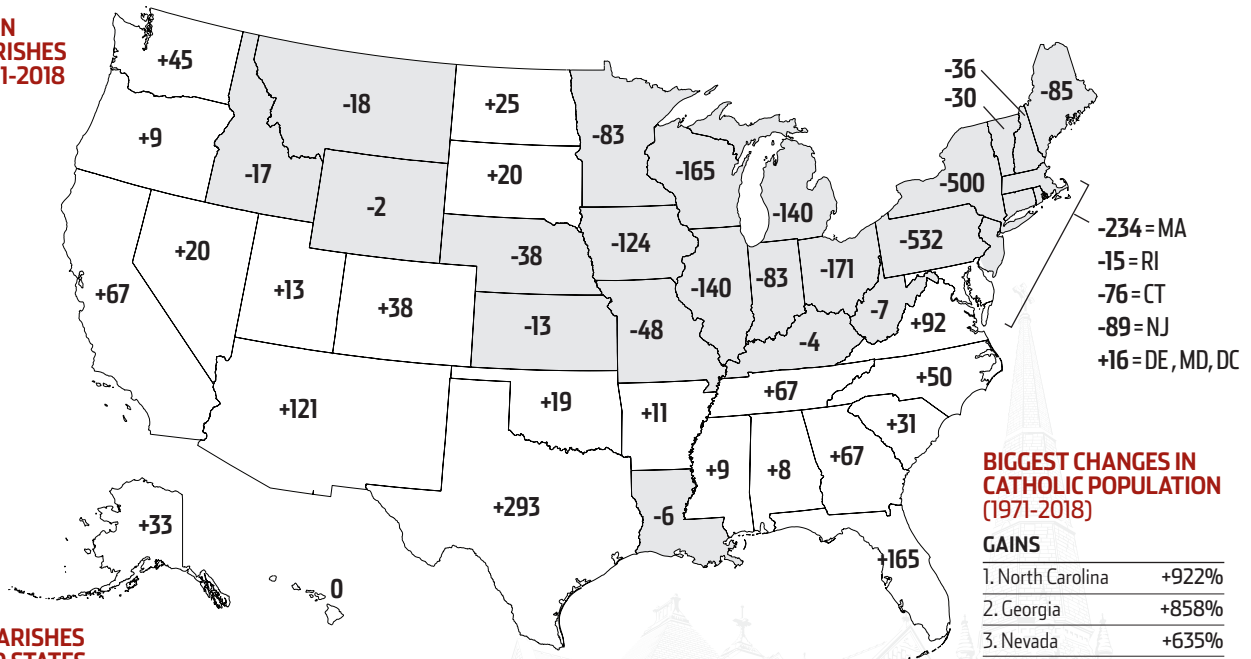
NET CHANGE IN CATHOLIC PARISHES BY STATE, 1971-2018

- GAINS
- LOSSES

CATHOLICS PER PARISH (2018)

NEW YORK
5,743

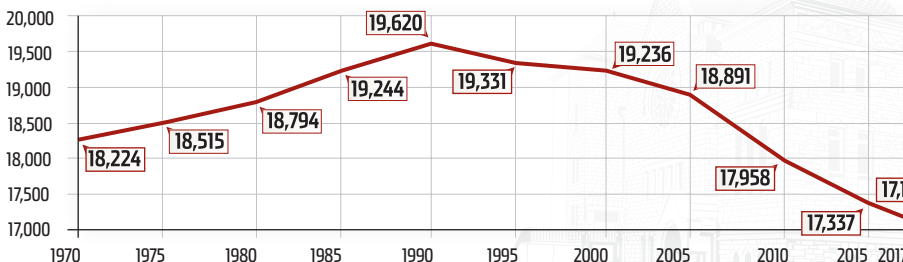
NEVADA
12,639



BIGGEST CHANGES IN CATHOLIC POPULATION (1971-2018)

GAINS	
1. North Carolina	+922%
2. Georgia	+858%
3. Nevada	+635%
4. South Carolina	+582%
5. Utah	+370%
LOSSES	
1. Pennsylvania	-17%
2. Rhode Island	-17%
3. Michigan	-16%
4. Vermont	-16%
5. Massachusetts	-14%

NUMBER OF PARISHES IN THE UNITED STATES



Source: "Where the Parish Doors Have Closed...and Opened," Feb. 22, 2019, on the blog "1964," published by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, Washington, D.C. Line graph data from FAQ page, CARA website.

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AP Photo/Brett Barrouquere, File

Same-sex marriage plaintiffs create scholarship for L.G.B.T. Catholics

Michael De Leon and Gregory Bourke in Louisville, Ky., in 2013.

Dismayed by the negative messages L.G.B.T. Catholics often face regarding their place in the church—like firings of L.G.B.T. workers by Catholic institutions and negative comments about gay people from some church leaders—Greg Bourke and Michael De Leon decided to take action. The couple, who were plaintiffs in the 2015 Supreme Court case that legalized same-sex marriage in the United States, recently announced the creation of an endowed scholarship at the University of Louisville that will support Catholic students or graduates of Catholic high schools who identify as L.G.B.T.

“We’ve had so many talks about what we can do to encourage L.G.B.T.Q. youth to stay in the Catholic faith, to remain rather than walk away, and we had this revelation,” Mr. Bourke said.

The scholarship, which Mr. Bourke said he believes is the first of its kind in the nation, will be awarded next month. The University of Louisville, a public institution with nearly 16,000 undergraduate students, offers six other scholarships that also benefit L.G.B.T. students.

“We think that L.G.B.T.Q. young people today don’t get enough encouragement to stay in the faith,” said Mr. Bourke, a 1979 graduate of the University of Louisville. “They get too easily discouraged when they read about the discrimination that’s taking place.

“They see these things happening with the church—discriminating against L.G.B.T.Q. people—and they think, ‘Why should I stay?’” Mr. Bourke said.

Mr. De Leon agrees.

“So many L.G.B.T.Q. people feel that their faith and their sexuality is an either/or situation,” he said. “We feel that even though the Catholic Church does not make it easy, young people need to be encouraged to keep the faith in which they have grown up and hopefully love.

“Greg and I often say, ‘If we leave, they win,’” he added.

“We feel we can change things by practicing the faith we love and by helping others do the same.”

Mr. Bourke and Mr. De Leon were lawfully married in Canada in 2004, but their union was not recognized in their home state of Kentucky. In 2013, with same-sex marriage already legal in several U.S. states, they agreed to be part of a lawsuit against Kentucky, seeking in federal court the right to have their marriage recognized by the state.

While a judge ruled in their favor in 2014, saying Kentucky must recognize marriages conducted in other jurisdictions, that decision was later overturned by an appeals court. A group of plaintiffs that included Mr. Bourke and Mr. De Leon appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, which in 2015 cleared the way for same-sex marriage nationwide.

The pair are both lifelong Catholics and are not shy about discussing their faith; their two children attended Catholic schools, and the family volunteers at church together.

Mr. Bourke said that he and his husband, both of whom are graduates of Catholic schools, have experienced homophobia in the church over the years. Despite the occasional challenges, Mr. Bourke said he long ago chose to remain part of the church, and he does not plan to walk away anytime soon.

“If something is really important to you, you really need to fight for it,” Mr. Bourke said, adding that he and his husband feel compelled to speak publicly about their lives in order “to change people’s hearts and minds.”

Mr. Bourke said that when it comes to L.G.B.T. Catholics, the situation has improved over recent decades—progress he hopes will be aided by the scholarship.

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



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GOODNEWS

The Christian mission of Israel's only halfway house for Palestinians

Hundreds of Melkite Catholics are planning to attend Good Friday services at the chandelier-adorned Church of Our Lady in Haifa, just across from a children's soccer field and the cobblestone courtyard of a residence where 15 men serve out the final months of their prison sentences. Many have been convicted of serious criminal offenses like murder, arms dealing and drug trafficking.

The men live in the only halfway house for Arab offenders in Israel, called House of Grace. It may also be the only rehabilitation program in Israel that offers the Divine Liturgy.

Salah Akoul, 53, said that without House of Grace, he would be back in prison. After spending 26 years in and out of prison for drug- and arms-trafficking offenses, Mr. Akoul has now completed his residency and is living on his own. He said that the experience at House of Grace changed his "primitive" way of thinking and taught him how to be part of a family. "It's important for me to let people know that this place does really help," he said.

House of Grace has been providing rehabilitative services for incarcerated Palestinian citizens of Israel since it was founded in the 1980s by Kamil and Agnes Shehade. Inspired by Jesus' call in Matthew 25 to feed the hungry,

clothe the naked and visit the prisoner, they transformed the premises of a then-abandoned church into House of Grace. Their son, Jamal Shehade, is the current director. He grew up at House of Grace and said he did not realize until much later that his "uncles" were "ex-convicts, recovering addicts and runaways."

Following an interview process with the facility, residents live at House of Grace for nine months while they receive group therapy and one-on-one counseling and are accompanied by staff 24/7. The House of Grace staff focuses on community-building, helping residents to find jobs, pay their bills and learn to live together.

Once their nine-month stay is complete, they are required to visit House of Grace periodically over the following year, and former residents must submit to further counseling and drug-use checks.

House of Grace has a Christian mission, but it is not an evangelical enterprise, and its residents, like Mr. Akoul, are mostly Muslim. Mr. Shehade is a Melkite Catholic and Palestinian who lives in Israel. Melkites are the largest group of Christians in Israel, but Christians are still a small minority, making up about 2 percent of the overall population.

Although Mr. Shehade has Israeli citizenship, ac-



Photo: Eloise Blondiau

Entrance to the House of Grace in Haifa, Israel.

According to Israel's new nation-state law, Israel is the "historic homeland of the Jewish people" and "the nation-state of the Jewish people." This puts Mr. Shehade and other Palestinian Christians living in Israel in a unique, often difficult position. "For Jews, we are Arabs; for Muslims, we are Christians; for the Arab world, we are traitors," he said.

But Mr. Shehade says that House of Grace shows that Palestinian Christians in Israel have a "special role" because of their intersecting identities and because they show paths toward peace on a local level. "As a Christian I have a message in this world. And that message is to be a good Christian as Jesus told us, and to serve the other—it doesn't matter for what reason or who he is, even if he is my worst enemy and he needs support, I will try and help him," said Mr. Shehade.

"This message is very needed in the Middle East, where you have conflicts between every ethnic or religious group that you have here."

Eloise Blondiau, *producer*.
Twitter: @eloiseblondiau.



Pilgrims display a banner that says "Pope Francis One of Us" at the Youth Jubilee in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican in April 2016.

Pope Francis urges young people not to abandon the church

Commenting on the painful wounds of the sexual abuse crisis that has been so disheartening to young Catholics, Pope Francis urged them not to abandon "our Mother when she is wounded, but stand beside her, so that she can summon up all her strength and all her ability to begin ever anew." In "Christ Is Alive," an apostolic exhortation released on April 2, Pope Francis writes that with the help of young people, this dark moment for the church "can truly be an opportunity for a reform of epoch-making significance, opening us to a new Pentecost and inaugurating a new stage of purification and change capable of renewing the church's youth."

The exhortation was "inspired by the wealth of reflections and conversations" of last October's Synod of Bishops on Young People, Faith, and Vocational Discernment. He signed the document at the Marian shrine of Loreto in Italy on March 25, as a reminder that Mary was a young teenager when she responded to God's call and so helped to change human history.

He recognizes that some young people feel the presence of the church as "a nuisance and even an irritant" because of sexual and financial scandals, a clergy that is not sensitive to the young and "her doctrinal and ethical positions." He says young people want "a church that listens more, that does more than simply condemn," a church "that needs to regain her humility."

In his exhortation the pope describes Catholic young people as not simply the future of the church but its "present." Pope Francis opens the 210-page letter by reminding Christian young people that "Christ is alive! He is our hope, and in a wonderful way he brings youth to our world."

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

A young boy with short dark hair, wearing a red long-sleeved shirt and dark pants, sits on the concrete threshold of a doorway. The doorway is part of a building with severely damaged, cracked, and peeling walls. The boy looks directly at the camera with a somber expression. To his right, a white plastic bag is hanging from the door frame. The floor is dusty and has some debris, including a pair of sandals. The lighting is natural, coming from the right side, highlighting the textures of the damaged walls and the boy's clothing.

AFTER ISIS

*Can the Christian community
in northern Iraq survive?*

By Kevin Clarke

Around us the rubble of West Mosul throws a fine white dust into the air. It coats your clothing and grits your hair, covers your shoes and camera lens and gets into just about everything else. I find myself wondering what percentage of my newly acquired Mosul particles are vaporized human remains.


Of course, people were not the only targets in the Old City during ISIS' last stand before being driven from Mosul in July 2017. Centuries of Christian and Muslim places of worship were reduced to piles of gravel and debris.

The view from atop a remnant of the collapsed roof of the Syriac Catholic Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception (the Church of Al-tahira), parts of which date back to the seventh century, is especially disheartening. Though the sounds of hammers and circular saws at work in the streets below can be heard this October morning, the perspective is one of utter desolation in all directions. What a spiteful, retreating ISIS, disparagingly referred to here as Daesh, did not destroy, U.S. and Iraqi air and drone strikes

pounded into rubble. (Much of the debris from the church sites has since been removed, but little progress otherwise has been made toward the restoration of the Old City's ruined churches, and the United Nations Mine Action Service estimates it could take decades to completely clear thousands of tons of explosive hazards, from suicide belts to improvised devices, out of Mosul.)

My impromptu guide on this visit, Yohanna Towaya, a Syriac Catholic and a professor at a satellite site of the University of Mosul, has made many trips into the Old City since its liberation. He considers the visits completely safe. "These people are Iraqis; I know them," Mr. Towaya says. "The trouble came from outside," he adds, explaining that the most vicious members of ISIS were extremist recruits from other nations, not local Sunni Muslims.

Not everyone shares that assessment. The night before my visit, a security analyst in Erbil, across the border in the autonomous region of Iraqi-Kurdistan, provides a one-man seminar on conditions in Mosul, expounding on the



Yazidi children from Iraq's Sinjar region at a displaced person camp served by Jesuit Refugee Service near Shariya, Iraq. Like Nineveh's Christians, the Yazidi people were especially targeted by ISIS in what U.N. investigators described as genocide in 2016.

many dangers that await me there—ISIS snipers, I.E.D.s and sleeper cells looking for opportunities to kidnap Westerners feature prominently in his enthusiastic presentation. Around the city Shiite militia and Iraqi army checkpoints halt traffic, but inside Mosul's bombed-out districts security forces of any sort are barely evident.

“Who told you that ISIS is finished in this area?” he asks, grimacing and shaking his head. “ISIS is reorganizing itself,” he says confidently. Its members have shaved their beards and melted back into the populace; they are waiting, he assures me.

“We are still finding bodies and booby traps,” the security analyst says, asking if I will be traveling through Mosul in an armored vehicle.

Sweet Tea in Mosul

Just a few hours later, I am sitting among strangers in a tea shop in the Old City, Sunni Muslims who have returned to the ruins to start over, and I am drinking a small glass of

sweet tea with them, no armored vehicles in sight. Along this former commercial corridor, a scattering of shops have reopened—breakouts of bright colors among the gray and black of the blasted storefronts.

The tea shop owner and his patrons seem happy to have an American among them; the few inhabitants of this gray skeleton of a city are keen to show what hospitality they can muster. One customer is a young man from the Red Crescent Society eager to practice his English; Solane Ghazi explains that most of the people at the shop live in the remnants of what had been their homes. Their poverty and the lack of any meaningful assistance from Baghdad leave them no other option.

“This man's house,” he says, pointing to one of the guests at the tea shop, “was eradicated completely.”

Mr. Ghazi was born and raised in Mosul, one of Iraq's biggest cities, with a pre-ISIS population of about 1.5 million. What has befallen his city is an utter disaster, he says, but he remains hopeful that West Mosul can be rebuilt.



Amid the ruins of Mosul's Old City, some former residents have returned and are attempting to start over. Many here complain about the complete lack of assistance from the central government in Baghdad.

“When the people gather together and put their hands to work in Mosul,” he says, smiling broadly, “there is nothing impossible here.”

His optimism is refreshing, but it is hard to imagine on this dusty morning how this city can be restored. Across the Tigris, Mosul's eastern half has largely been spared the devastation visited on this side of the river, and life proceeds there much as before, with one glaring difference: Virtually all the Christians, once a small but significant part of the cultural fabric of Mosul, are gone. This is part of a larger exodus that has seen the Christian population of Iraq—ethnic Assyrians, Chaldeans and other minorities who belong to the Syriac Orthodox, Syriac Catholic, Chaldean Catholic and other churches—fall from more than 1.4 million at the beginning of the century to a few hundred thousand today.

While many Christians return during daylight to check on the condition of their former homes, only a handful so far have returned to live in Mosul. They have been warmly welcomed back by their Muslim neighbors, Mr. Towaya is quick to point out. He clings to his own small hope for the restoration of Mosul's Chaldean, Syriac and other Christian communities. He believes that if the church comes back, the people will follow.

“They want to return to their houses,” he says. “They are afraid. Until now they have no confidence to return to Mosul.... But if one of the priests or bishops will return, I think the people will earn courage and they will return to Mosul quickly.”

But many of Mosul's former Christian residents insist they will never return. Members of scores of Christian families who now live scattered across the Ankawa District

in Erbil can tell the same story as Maryam, 22, and her sister Wasan, 18. As the sounds of gunfire and explosions announced the approach of Daesh militants in the early morning hours of June 10, 2014, they fled with just the clothes on their backs—a few minutes ahead of Daesh but in the wake of escaping police and Iraqi security forces. Maryam remembers watching the soldiers strip off their uniforms as they escaped ahead of the terrified Christians.

Like hundreds of other Christian families from Mosul and Nineveh, the two sisters have made lives for themselves in near exile in Iraqi-Kurdistan, a few hours away by car. They now attend the Catholic University of Erbil and hope to find professional work when they graduate. Their father, Yousif, has little enthusiasm for life in Erbil, a city of nearly a million, but he insists that he and his children will never go back to Mosul.

“How can we live with them again?” Maryam asks of former neighbors who welcomed ISIS even as Christian families fled. “My father lived his whole life with them, talking with them, working with them, and just like that, that is how they treat us?”

“No, I don't think so,” she says, her bright smile dissolving. “I don't think that trust can ever be restored.”

Yousif is ready to leave Iraq behind forever if another nation (the United States, he suggests) accepts him and his family, but he has experienced nothing but frustration in various attempts to get his family officially settled elsewhere as refugees. How can the international community stand by and do nothing to help us, he wonders. He does not understand the world's silence before the massive groan of Christian suffering in Iraq.



Who Can Forgive?

The Chaldean Catholic archbishop, Bashar Warda, leader of the Diocese of Erbil, has also puzzled over the global silence about the crisis of Christianity in Iraq. For years, since the ISIS offensive across the Province of Nineveh in northern Iraq made him the de facto pastor of hundreds of displaced Christian families, he has struggled to raise international attention to the plight of Christians and other religious and ethnic minorities here. His improvised relief effort was largely funded by the local church and international Christian humanitarian agencies like Aid to the Church in Need and the Knights of Columbus in the United States.

However small the remaining Chaldean, Orthodox and other Christian communities, Archbishop Warda insists that Christians still have an important role to play in Iraq. They must be the bridge builders, the mediators, the connectors among the nation's many religious and ethnic divides, he says.

Christians here have one more important but difficult job to perform, he said. "ISIS is sin of the 21st century," he says, "and this evilness should be challenged, stopped, terminated, but most important, forgiven."

He says it is up to the people who have been most wronged by ISIS to forgive them. "Only the victims of this sin...are the ones who are qualified to forgive," he says, and the archbishop believes that the region's Christians bear a special obligation to do so.

The archbishop was in Washington in December 2018 to witness the signing of legislation that would send more U.S. humanitarian aid directly to nongovernmental organi-

zations and church-based committees struggling to rebuild Nineveh's war-wracked communities, bypassing Iraq's central government. Archbishop Warda believes that the plan to fund rebuilders directly should accelerate reconstruction here—virtually no one in Erbil believes Baghdad would spend aid money fruitfully—but he says so much more needs to be done, and done soon, to prevent the extinguishment of the Christian light in Iraq.

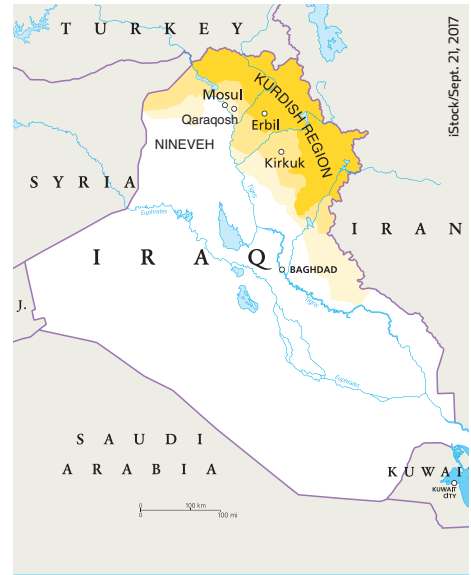
The Christian presence in Iraq, which can trace its lineage back to first-century communities believed to have been established by the apostles St. Thomas and St. Thaddeus, had already suffered significant decline even before the ISIS rampage across Nineveh. For decades, as U.S. no-fly zones and sanctions wore down the Iraqi economy, Christians who had the means left the country for jobs and opportunities elsewhere in the Middle East, Europe and the United States.

Archbishop Warda declines to speculate about the exact number of Christians left in Iraq today. The most optimistic estimates say that 300,000 remain. But harder assessments report that 150,000 Christians or even fewer hang on, a perhaps irreversible decline from the population that exceeded 1.5 million—about 6 percent of the country's population—before the U.S. invasion in 2003. Those Christians who remain cite the many practical obstacles to leaving Iraq, but a harder-to-define spiritual and cultural obstinacy also seems to be playing a role.

One evening in October two young Chaldeans describe the experience of living as members of a Christian minority in Iraq. One, Ramin, had fled with his family from the city of Kirkuk even before ISIS attacked because of a previ-



These children at a kindergarten supported by Jesuit Refugee Service in Qaraqosh are a small sign of life in a Christian city that had been completely devastated by ISIS occupation.



ous round of hostility and death threats from his Muslim neighbors. The other, Alin, says that for members of a minority faith, even an Iraqi city like Erbil, relatively at home with diversity, can be filled with petty indignities.

Yet these two men plan to stay in Erbil and try to build lives here. They recognize the barriers to legal asylum in Europe and the United States and say the illegal route into Europe has proved far too dangerous. The same week we talked, a funeral procession circled the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Erbil, bearing the bodies of two Chaldean youths who had drowned off the coast of Greece in a futile, fatal effort to escape to Europe.

The young men also say they simply do not want to start all over somewhere else.

“This is where my family is, this is where my friends are, this is where my church is,” says Alin. “We [Assyrian Christians] are the indigenous people of this land. We built this civilization, we built this country,” he says defiantly.

He intends to stay, but does he maintain much hope for the Christian community in Iraq? He shakes his head. Alin says he “cannot think of the future.” The challenges of each day are enough for him.

A Vocation of Presence

“We have moved from an established church to a missionary church,” Archbishop Warda says, as close to an acknowledgment as you are likely to hear from him about how severely Christian numbers have been diminished in the Nineveh region and Iraq. The Christians who remain to rebuild must accept life here as a vocation, he believes, “because there is no [other] reason for them to stay and there are hundreds of reasons for any family to leave the country—[lack of] security, lack of education, lack of a dignified life, lack of trust in the future.... All of these reasons

are justified.”

“I cannot but say, ‘Yes, you are right, you have to care for your family and what [you have] already experienced is too much,’” he admits. “But despite all this, I have people who say, ‘No, this is our land, I have to stay, no matter what happens.’... I have to think, here we have a vocation.”

It is no easy vocation. Although ISIS has been driven from the territory it had claimed in central and northern Iraq, its ideology persists, and Sunni resentment toward Iraq’s Shiite leadership and Baghdad policymaking in the region remains unresolved. The political situation in northern Iraq has grown only more complex and unstable.

After an ill-conceived independence referendum provoked a military incursion by Iraqi Security Forces in September 2017, the Kurdistan independence movement splintered into factionalism that threatens to break out into violence. Though Turkey and Iran maintain a shared hostility to the Kurdish Workers’ Party, which they regard as a terrorist organization, the two regional powers have been otherwise locked in a struggle for de facto control of Nineveh, the heartland of Iraq’s Assyrian Christians. The Iraqi central government at times seems barely a player in Nineveh’s drama.

The United States, after sacrificing thousands of lives and trillions of dollars on the destruction of the Saddam Hussein-led Baathist establishment in Iraq, appears to many Christians similarly ineffectual in Nineveh. They believe it is Iran that has emerged with the most coherent strategy to control the region.

“The Iranians will never protect the Christians,” my Erbil security expert says. “The Americans are sleeping; they don’t know what they are doing.”

It is an observation repeated often. Christians marvel at American ineffectiveness and see Iranian intrigue be-

A view of what remains of the Syriac Catholic Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Mosul. U.N. teams cleared much of the rubble, but the church has not been restored.



hind any number of civic and political mutations in northern Iraq. Though Shiite militia helped dislodge the despised Daesh, many now wonder if the Christians in Nineveh are only a few years away from confronting a new existential crisis—maybe a different variant of Islamic extremism, this time emerging from within Iraq’s Shiite community.

Bartella, once a largely Christian city, is experiencing a transformation that has created much hesitation to return among former Christian residents. The Shabak, a mostly Shiite ethno-religious community that established itself in Nineveh centuries ago, are moving into Bartella from surrounding villages, buying up Christian homes or squatting in properties abandoned by Christian families. The Shabak community for decades endured oppression under Saddam Hussein, and they were brutally victimized themselves by ISIS, but many Christians have come to view them not as possible allies and co-restorers of Nineveh but as rivals for control of the province.

Freed from Saddam’s Sunni tyranny, the Shabak are flexing newly acquired civic and political muscle. Shiite flags, outlawed under Saddam, fly defiantly from their roofs. Shabak irregulars filled the ranks of the Hashd al-Shaabi militias (Popular Mobilization Units) that helped defeat Daesh, and now they patrol Bartella’s streets as the only real law enforcement in town. Christian merchants say

they are regularly harassed and intimidated by the militiamen, who extract “taxes” in the form of free goods from Christian liquor stores or name their own prices when paying for commercial services from Christians. Who can admonish them?

In other Nineveh communities, a Christian militia, the Nineveh Plains Protection Unit, offers some reassurance, but the N.P.U. is poorly equipped and thinly ranked; few believe it would constitute a reliable defense in the event of another ISIS-level onslaught. In fact, many Nineveh Christians say that however much they distrust U.S. strategic and geopolitical judgment, it is only U.S. boots on the ground that will provide their beleaguered community with protection it can count on.

Signs of Life

As disheartening as are the ruins of Mosul and the region’s complicated politics, a short drive north from Mosul through Iraqi army and Shiite militia checkpoints delivers visitors to Qaraqosh and perhaps some good news about Christian viability in Nineveh. Like Mosul, this Christian city suffered three years of ISIS occupation and was pounded by artillery fire and aerial strikes by the Iraqi military in the campaign to take it back from the militants. The city’s residents fled en masse in August 2014 after Kurdish pesh



Children find a way to play anywhere, even in the ruins of West Mosul.

merga fighters, who had promised to protect Qaraqosh, evacuated just ahead of an ISIS offensive.

But in early October, 17 months after the first of Qaraqosh's wary residents returned in shock to a city in ruins, storefronts in the city center are open for business, and families and young people are out enjoying the welcome cool of the early evening. They are shopping, heading to restaurants, arguing with friends or just enjoying a stroll, taking care to avoid the construction debris that has turned the city's sidewalks into an obstacle course.

A kindergarten sponsored by Jesuit Refugee Service has opened to scores of children who will have no memory of their families' desperate flight from the city almost five years ago; an adjoining low-income housing complex has been restored, and many of its residents have returned to reclaim apartments once occupied by ISIS militants—just a few of the signs of life in this long-suffering community.

The Nineveh Reconstruction Committee, an ad hoc church-led restoration effort drawing support and expertise from a number of U.S. and European charities, has sponsored much of the rebuilding in Qaraqosh, one part of an ambitious effort to rebuild Nineveh's Christian communities across Nineveh. The committee reports that about 40 percent of the 14,000 damaged homes it has selected for repair are now habitable and that 46 percent of the families who had fled ISIS have returned. The N.R.C. has helped restore hundreds of homes in Qaraqosh, but the Rev. George Jahola, a Syriac Catholic priest who is president of the Church Supreme Board for the Reconstruction of Baghdad (the city's Assyrian name), worries that progress will remain on track only if more funding can be secured.

On a conference room wall at the Syriac Catholic community center, Father Jahola points to a giant map of Qaraqosh. It shows in detail the specific damage at individual

Christian homes: Virtually all were stripped bare by looting; many were also damaged by fire and explosives; and others were destroyed completely by ISIS or by Iraqi or U.S. mortar or air strikes. Another map highlights which houses have been restored, which are nearly finished and which will require complete reconstruction.

It is painstaking work, but Father Jahola seems pleased by the thoroughness and precision of his efforts. Each restored home on his map is a small mark of hope for the viability of the Christian community in Iraq.

Father Jahola's remarkable progress in Qaraqosh has been repeated in other Christian communities across Nineveh. In the town of Karamles, about 60 percent of the homes have been restored, and work continues to repair the Shrine of St. Barbara. It had been desecrated and transformed into a sniper's nest by ISIS. In Teleskuf, where Christians have been displaced twice—first by ISIS and then by fighting between Peshmerga and Iraqi government forces—most of the damaged homes have been repaired and the church of St. George beautifully restored.

Millions have been raised by the N.R.C. and other Christian aid groups and millions spent so far on this complex, ongoing effort, but how many Iraqi Christians will return from exile to inhabit these resurrected communities remains a poignant question.

However much assistance Father Jahola is able to cobble together for individual families, many who have left Nineveh say they will never be persuaded to return. Rashel Nadir, 20, a student at the Catholic University of Erbil, says she and many of her generation would surely stay in Iraq if security and minority rights could be more certain. But the chaotic status quo is not acceptable. "We cannot be a victim again of ISIS or another group," she says, recalling what a near thing her family's escape from Qaraqosh had

A statue of Mary watches over the Assyrian Christian district of Ankawa in Erbil, Iraq-Kurdistan, where thousands of Christians and others found refuge after ISIS overran Nineveh in 2014.



been. “We cannot do that.”

Joe Cassar, S.J., leads the efforts of Jesuit Refugee Service in northern Iraq with programs on either side of Iraqi government and Kurdish Peshmerga lines of control. In Jesuit fashion, he and his team have focused on creating educational opportunities for young people in neighborhoods being restored in Qaraqosh, in addition to assisting internally displaced people—Yazidi families driven out of Sinjar by ISIS—in the Sharya camps near the Kurdish city of Dohuk.

One J.R.S. enrichment program serves a dual purpose. Assisting young people whose educational path has been severely derailed by years of war, it also seeks to reconnect former neighbors in a district shared by Christian and Shabak families, the same Shiite community that is raising anxiety levels among Christians in Bartella. “Yes, it is important and necessary to rebuild houses,” Father Cassar explains. “But it is important also to rebuild trust.”

Archbishop Warda has launched a number of development campaigns in Erbil that he insists will mean that Christians will not merely survive in Iraq, but thrive here. In January the diocese opened a new, modern hospital. Across Nineveh, Catholic and Assyrian-language schools

have been restored.

Administrators at the new Catholic University of Erbil hope to enroll hundreds of Christian students in the coming years. The diocese has also sponsored new apartments for young married couples and built a shopping complex; it continues to seek opportunities to create jobs for Erbil’s well-educated and restless youth—all part of a tireless effort to rebuild the Christian community and hope in Iraq.

“If there is no Christian presence, then this area of the world would not be lighted by the presence of the Gospel and the good news. That’s the basic thing,” Archbishop Warda says. He is unable to countenance “leaving an area without the presence of Jesus.”

“And when we come to an area affected by sin, well, that’s where Christians also are needed,” he says, “and when we are being crucified and persecuted, also we are needed.”

“A Middle East without Christians, well,” he grimaces, “no one could imagine this.”

Kevin Clarke is *America’s chief correspondent and the author of Oscar Romero: Love Must Win Out (Liturgical Press)*.
Twitter: @Clarkeatamerica.





#MineToo

*Why would a woman
remain Catholic today?*

By Cecilia González-Andrieu

The story of the dysfunction of the Catholic Church as an institution is now the subject of multiple investigations and copious news coverage worldwide. Tragically, at issue is not just the sexual abuse of minors by clergy or the exploitation of women religious or the exclusion of women from positions of authority and oversight or denying women full use of their gifts. We are now confronting *all of this together*.

The picture that emerges is stark: In the eyes of the world, the church has lost much of its moral authority.

My part in this story began a few days after the Pennsylvania attorney general released a devastating report describing in detail hundreds of cases of sexual abuse of minors by members of the clergy, when I received an oddly addressed envelope marked “personal.” Inside was a “study guide” claiming to prove that the Catholic Church was “the harlot of Babylon.” We have all likely seen these pamphlets before. This time, however, the sender identified himself, gave me his phone number and added: “It is so clear that Satan is in control of so much of the Catholic Church: now is a wonderful time to get out of Babylon, Rev 18:1-4, God be with you and yours.”

His conviction was impossible to simply dismiss. Is this how others see us now?

A few months later, as more records of abuse emerged, I joined 3,000 other Hispanic Catholics in Dallas, Tex., for the culmination of the V Encuentro process. Heading there, many of us imagined a time of speaking truthfully, praying together, grieving and healing. Even accounting for over 500 ordained members of the clergy in attendance, it was obvious that more than half of the delegates were women. Yet as the program unfolded, it was challenging to find the community we sought, as few women were included in the liturgical ministries and or in the major talks.

In the hallways, some women expressed outrage, while others seemed simply resigned. Is this how we see ourselves now?

Lamentations

I started comparing notes with other Catholic women who teach or lead ministries in the church. What were they hearing from their communities? Some recounted that their students asked why women would remain Catholic today. Others shared how their elderly parents grieved, unable to participate in Mass or “look a priest in the eye” because of the abuse crisis. One woman lamented the loss of her nephew’s vocation: He had tragically “walked away” from his plans to enter the seminary.

I began to notice that anywhere I spoke, when I reflected on our priorities as a church, advocated for a gospel of mercy and inclusion or expounded on the requirements of the *Reino de Dios*, women young and old wanted to have conversations. In any part of the country, at large meetings or small, in universities, parishes or classrooms, women came up to me, speaking in whispers. Women who teach, run ministries, parent and study shared their experiences of marginalization and their desire to serve the church and our collective good. They were also explicit about their fear of speaking up. “Why stay Catholic?” was no longer just a question coming from curious outsiders; it was a question we were asking ourselves.

Signs of the Times

One of my students, a 30-something youth minister, recently introduced me to a new term: the “dones.” Thinking I had misheard her, I asked, “Do you mean the ‘nones,’ people who don’t identify as belonging to any religious tradition?”

“No, I mean the ‘dones,’” she said, “Like, in, ‘I’m totally done with the Catholic Church.’”

There was pain in her voice, which soon gave way to tears. Saying “none” could be about disaffection, boredom or the perception of a faith tradition’s irrelevance, but “done” was about betrayal and disillusionment. It was about love and loss.

Melissa Cedillo, a recent graduate of Loyola Marymount University who is now working on issues that affect women, echoed my student’s frustration. “When are we going to have our #MeToo movement?” she asked, referring to the growing willingness in the worlds of business, entertainment and politics to act on women’s allegations of sexual harassment and abuse. We have no analogous community rising to speak on behalf of women in the Catholic Church, she lamented.

In a very practical way, the need to articulate reasons for remaining Catholic as women is also related to the church’s demographic survival and moral relevance. Betty Anne Donnelly, a former lay missionary and philanthropist, told me of her fear that “people’s willingness to learn about and be inspired by the church’s rich social tradition has been fundamentally undermined by the institutional church’s positions on several issues, not the least of which is the church’s failure to avail itself of the tremendous gifts of women in its liturgical life and governance.”

The contributions of Catholic social teaching and all the good works it inspires contribute to society in truly significant ways. Consequently, the church’s ability to grow and thrive in its ministries of compassion and mercy affect the whole world. The imperative to survive as the global Catholic Church is most acute when we think of how the most vulnerable and dispossessed of the earth depend on our work.

What Can We Learn From the Past?

Women are Supreme Court justices and astronauts, surgeons and philosophers, prime ministers and firefighters. And although in many parts of our unjust world women and girls are kept from school and viewed only as necessary for reproduction, there are many of us with education and political voice working against this injustice. The wider culture has come to accept the basic truth that gender has no bearing on abilities or intelligence and cannot be used to curtail our God-given freedom. But today, in many corners of the church, women are not treated with equal dignity and worth. Too often, the structures of the Catholic Church show little openness to meaningful transformation.

This is not a new story. As the formidable Teresa de Jesús set out from Ávila in the 16th century, braving cold

AMERICA'S GUIDE TO RETREATS

Many of our readers are curious about retreats. What does one do on a retreat? Where does one go? What are some good retreat houses? Simply put, a retreat is an extended period of prayer, usually done in silence, and usually at a retreat house, where a team of spiritual directors helps you find God in your prayer. There are also different kinds of retreats. On a directed retreat a person meets daily with a spiritual director to discuss what is happening in prayer. A guided retreat focuses more on one topic (say, women's spirituality) and offers presentations as well as opportunities to meet with a director a few times. Preached retreats consist in listening to presentations and praying on your own, but with less opportunity for direction.



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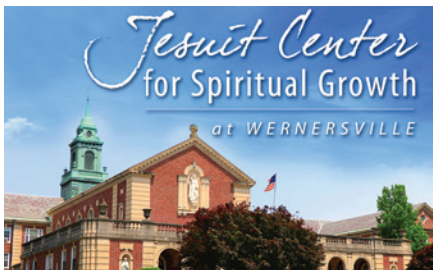
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 Website: www.desertrenewal.org

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 Website: www.spiritmin.org

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St. Mary's, Hatton Road, Kinnoull, Perth, PH2 7BP, Scotland, UK
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 Website: www.kinnoullmonastery.co.uk

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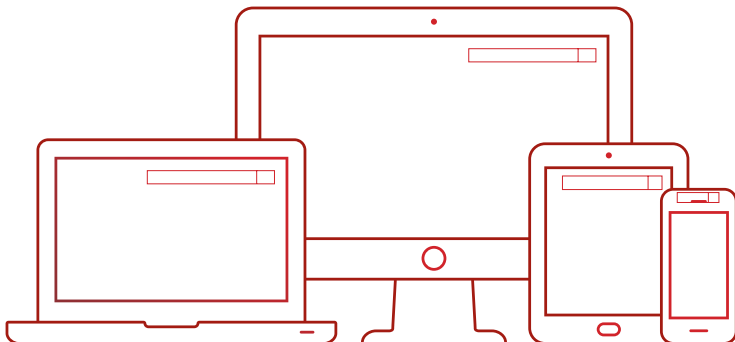


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1257 East Siena Heights Drive, Adrian, MI 49221
 Ph: (517) 266-4000; Email: webercenter@adriandominicans.org
 Website: webercenter.org

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The need to articulate reasons for remaining Catholic as women is also related to the church's demographic survival and moral relevance.

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and illness to reform a religious order, her every move was controlled by men. St. Teresa was not allowed to study formally, and young priests were appointed to “guide her.” She was consistently made to feel inferior and incapable. But as difficult as Teresa’s life as a Carmelite nun was, religious life was often the only space where a woman in her time could have any education and develop her gifts.

The 20th century church offered something different. Following the Second Vatican Council, many women sought the possibility of theological study, and more than a few persevered to earn advanced degrees. At my own university, the merging of Marymount College and Loyola University in 1973 allowed for the co-education of women and men. Shortly after, the church historian Marie Anne Mayeski joined the faculty as the university’s first woman theologian. Her teaching inspired me, and she suggested I continue my studies. The door of education, once opened, could not be shut again, and we now have three generations of women theologians teaching the fourth.

But getting here has not been easy. In various other Christian denominations, committed students will often receive considerable institutional and financial support for graduate theological education. Catholic women rarely receive any from the church. For a Catholic woman (lay or religious), completing an advanced degree in theology can

be a lonely and costly climb.

Today, many women theologians teach priests. We evaluate their work, engage them in the complexity of the Catholic intellectual tradition and help form them for ministry. But in our own parishes, we are at times forced to sit silently by and watch deficient homilies, uninspiring liturgies, neglected communities and abuses of power.

As the young theologian Layla Karst confided to me, “I remember responding to a faculty member’s question about my career goals my senior year in college by expressing my desire to go into ministry and being told that as a woman, my options for this were either to become a nun or become a Protestant or become unemployed.”

What Must Change?

Embedded in the frequent question from students, “Why are you still Catholic?” is a suggestion that there is something very wrong that is apparent to everyone else. Why isn’t it obvious to us? What prevents us Catholics from seeing it?

My attempt to understand this question pointed me in the direction of neuroscience. We Catholics seem to be suffering from a collective case of a condition called anosognosia, “an inability or refusal to recognize a defect or disorder that is clinically evident.” But unlike an individual who

St. Teresa of Ávila's vision of the little Jesus in the Eucharist is depicted in this painting from the Chiesa di San Pietro in Oliveto. She kept her faith in the face of many challenges.

has suffered a traumatic brain injury, our problem seems to manifest itself in what the neuropsychologist Katherine Rankin characterizes as the “loss of the ability to accurately characterize one’s own personality and social behavior.” Once I replaced “the patient” with “the institutional Catholic Church,” I found Ms. Rankin’s outline of this condition in an essay for the anthology *The Study of Anosognosia* to be profoundly helpful.

Anosognosia is a pathological and extreme manifestation of a lack of self-knowledge or self-awareness, which in healthy persons (or in this case institutions) derives from:

1) Introspection: paying particular attention to our internal states and their meaning;

2) Exteroception: observing ourselves and our behaviors from an external, third-person vantage point, identifying group norms and, I surmise, playing an important role in moral reasoning;

3) Memory of a longitudinal self: putting together, through the aid of our memories, the key insights into ourselves and our behaviors that through multiple experiences we come to believe define us.

What lessons might we learn if we apply these categories to the institutional church?

We need introspection. This introspection must be vulnerable and truthful. It must notice how we feel, not avoid it. As an institution, are we joyful? Are we grateful? Do we feel we have clarity? Do we feel capable of doing the work of discipleship? If we feel none of these things, why not? What lies have we been telling ourselves about ourselves?

We need exteroception. If we step outside of ourselves and adopt the perspective of others beyond our institution, what do we find? Are we doing what it takes to be part of a moral order predicated on the inviolable dignity of every human person? How is that possible if we exclude half of the human race, victimize the vulnerable and cover up what we have done? What profound inconsistencies do others see in us that we fail to see in ourselves?

We need memory of who we are. We know how to do this. We have a rich bounty of memories from two millennia. From these, we can relearn and recalibrate who we are. The return to the sources, the *ressourcement* that guided much of the theological thought of the 20th century, did this. It allowed us to see more clearly and embrace more robustly Jesus’ words and actions as the best markers of our communal identity. Our interpolation of myriad ideologies extraneous to the New Testament witness, including

patriarchy, mind-body dualism and imperial hierarchical structures, have contributed much to our inability to know ourselves as disciples of a very unambiguous teacher who revealed to us a very unambiguous God.

According to Ms. Rankin, overcoming anosognosia can also be aided by “explicit communication from others.” The mortal danger our Catholic Church is in right now has many authors: the priest who abuses a child, the bishop who covers it up, the pastor who expects “Sister” to keep the parish humming and his food on the table, the priest whose homily makes young people leave never to return, the closed rooms where the few make decisions for the many.

This cursory list reveals that the “others” whose explicit communication may be helpful include women. But do women continue to be excluded by the power structures of the church precisely because our perspective is destabilizing to a false self-image? Ms. Rankin would probably think so. As she explains, “[p]atients who consistently reject explicit feedback about their behavior and personality are more likely to have had a multicomponent breakdown of the self-monitoring systems.”

We are experiencing a multicomponent breakdown of the institutional church’s self-monitoring systems, and we need urgent intervention.

Why Are You Still a Catholic?

The hope-filled answers to this question from Catholic women I trust may provide the very medicine that the anosognosia affecting our church desperately needs. Clinicians refer to cases of anosognosia as a “loss of insight.” So what are some insights, derived from our communal memory, that we can offer in order to heal our Catholic Church?

Be church. Shannon Green, the director of the CSJ Institute at Mount Saint Mary’s University in Los Angeles, is very clear: “As I have walked with college students for the past 15 years, I have returned to the question, ‘What makes good church?’” she tells me. We need to refocus on “church as ‘People of God,’ as radical hospitality, as pilgrims, as humble, vulnerable disciples who lay down our lives in radical friendship for our neighbor.”

Honor the incarnation. The theologian Nancy Pine-da-Madrid points out that “the Catholic faith is and can be so much better than a lot of what we see today. While the church is infused by God’s grace, it also commits sin.” This



is critical self-awareness. “I remain Catholic,” she tells me with conviction, “because, as a theologian, I have spent my life seriously studying this tradition and, in the process, have gained an ever-increasing appreciation of its enormous treasure. What we believe is extraordinary: We believe in the incarnation of the divine in human flesh, which is the greatest expression of God’s love for every human being. Wrestling with our beliefs will transform us and our world.”

Show up and act. A religious sister I greatly admire shared her grief with me while simultaneously insisting that her “first loyalty is to Jesus Christ and to being a faithful disciple during these difficult times. I cannot answer for those in power; I can only answer for my own actions, my own beliefs, my own response to the needs and the people I encounter each day. So I will continue to ‘show up’ as a Catholic and affirm my identity and my vocation.”

Make room for others. “Communion is an act of trust, caring for the local issue while holding on to the larger principles of speaking a common language of human life together,” the theologian Susan Abraham stressed in a note from the school of theology where she is dean. “Since this is a dynamic and organic notion, no blueprint exists for it because it arises in continuing dialogue and recognition of claims being made.”

Be a disciple. Emilie Grosvenor finds the deepest reason to remain Catholic in living out her discipleship. “To

leave behind my Catholic identity,” she wrote from Scotland, where she is completing her doctoral studies, “would be to disown part of myself, allowing it to be claimed by those against God’s reign who claim to speak on its behalf. When we do our best as disciples to reveal the goodness in the world and in so doing call ourselves Catholic, we prevent the church from being completely defined by false prophets. We allow for hope to break through.”

All of these women give me hope. Our church’s lack of insight, and the breakdown of our own self-monitoring systems, are curable. We cannot allow the very blindness of the condition to keep us from seeking the change that will heal us.

The “others” are here: women, offering themselves in faithful discipleship and with bold vision to renew our communal life and saying “mine too.” The Catholic Church is #MineToo.

Cecilia González-Andrieu is an associate professor of theological studies at Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, Calif., and a contributing writer for *America*.



THE ROAD

I can see my breath inside the church of St. Balbina. Some 1,700 years ago this was prime real estate, just off Rome's main thoroughfare, the Via Appia, an easy stroll to the Circus Maximus or the Baths of Caracalla. Today the sidewalk in front is weedy, and the church is tucked between the ruins of those baths and the spiked fence of a sprawling office complex belonging to the United Nations.

It is mid-Lent 2018. The day before, Rome experienced its first snowfall in half a decade, turning Bernini statues into angelic snowmen and provoking a fit of metaphoric excess in which I imagined the glittering frost covering the orange trees and umbrella pines as a kind of cosmic baptismal garment, hiding for a moment the Eternal City's trash collection problem. The next day, the snow remains—as does the trash—and the early medieval church in which I am concelebrating a 7 a.m. Mass is frigid.

And still it is one of my favorite moments in the year's pilgrimage toward Easter, perhaps because of the

solidarity that arises among the determined few who have made it to this obscure outpost housing the relics of an equally obscure saint: St. Balbina, the virgin daughter of a martyred Roman tribune who, it is said, was cured of a goiter upon discovering the chains that once bound St. Peter.

I am following the ancient itinerary of Rome's station churches, each morning trekking off to a different neighborhood seeking out churches built on the site of apostolic and legendary events—the home where Peter and Paul lived upon arriving in Rome; the room where Mark wrote his Gospel; the pit in which St. Lawrence was roasted; the spot the Blessed Virgin used another snowfall (this one miraculous) to reveal to Pope Liberius where to build St. Mary Major.

The liturgical scholar John Baldovin, S.J., posits that the practice of station liturgies emerged at a time when urban Christianity was growing in both size and complexity. They helped the bishop of a city—Jerusalem and

TO EASTER

A pilgrimage through Rome's station churches

By Anthony R. Lusvardi

Constantinople also developed station liturgies—unify his flock. The defining characteristic of the practice was that the bishop celebrated Mass each day in a different church, drawing Christians from other parts of the city together, highlighting the rhythms of the liturgical season and giving each neighborhood a chance to retell the local stories of martyrdom and courage that had by then become part of the fabric of early Christianity.

Stational liturgy in Rome has had its ups and downs. The century the pope decamped to France was a downswing; recent years have witnessed a resurgence. Today, the pope presides only at the first of the station churches, Santa Sabina on the Aventine Hill, but each morning the seminarians of the North American College conduct Mass in English at the other sites. The churches on the stational itinerary are among the city's oldest—the Jesuits' baroque masterpieces are a millennium too young to have made the cut—some well known, like St. Peter's, others less so, like St. Balbina's. But often enough the

most obscure churches turn out to be the most fascinating. Those are the places you might find a garrulous custodian willing to open up locked sacristies or excavations or crypts beneath the altar.

Following the station churches from Ash Wednesday to Easter—in 2018 I hit every one—is a trip back into the first strata of Christianity: to the era of all those folks St. Paul greets at the end of the Epistle to the Romans; to the years when popes—along with soldiers, matrons, virgins, deacons, aristocrats, stonemasons—ended up as martyrs; to the fourth century, when, at last legally tolerated, Christians started building basilicas over the house churches in which they had worshiped during the decades of on-again, off-again persecution.

Besides helping us to appreciate the tradition from which we have come—and to get in our steps for the day—Rome's Lenten stations highlight two other aspects of the church's yearly pilgrimage potentially neglected in our own decidedly softer age, when one does not have to worry

The liturgies of Lent and Easter, like the churches themselves, are built upon the conviction that the resurrection changes everything. 🍇🍇

about being buried alive by pagans (St. Vitale), roasted in one's own bath (St. Cecilia) or beheaded (St. Cecilia again—she survived the roasting).

Conversion

The first of these is the sense of conversion Easter should bring. Lent, after all, is preparation for the great festival of baptism, the Easter Vigil. Today, the sacraments of initiation are often enough mistaken for celebrations of life milestones—baptism for the celebration of a child's birth, confirmation as a coming-of-age marker. I am told the story of a Muslim immigrant to Rome who went about planning a baptism for his firstborn, imagining that “baptism” was just a kind of Italian baby shower without any particular religious significance. The story may be apocryphal but, even so, is plausible enough to illustrate the problem. The sacraments are meant to initiate us into the paschal mystery, not provide the photo backdrop for a cultural get-together.

In the early church—when baptism meant immersion and then maybe martyrdom—this reality was harder to miss. All the movement in Rome's stationary liturgy also has a way of hinting at conversion. At St. Vitale, for example, the celebrant preaches about baptism, using the church's peculiar geography to make his point. The church seems sunken in the ground because layers of the city have accumulated around it over the centuries; you have to descend a flight of stairs to enter. Descent is a key part of baptismal symbolism, immersion in the water joining us to Christ's descent into the tomb.

Once inside, St. Vitale immerses you in martyrdom. The church, in fact, commemorates a family of martyrs: St. Vi-

tale (dad), St. Valeria (mom), and Sts. Gervasius and Protasius (children). Other martyrs are more recent; this was the church assigned to the English bishop John Fisher when he was named a cardinal, only to be beheaded a month later by Henry VIII. The parish's abundant collection of relics is on display, its sanctuary and side altars festooned with blood-red sashes. And—perhaps my favorite decorative touch on the station pilgrimage—fresh cut laurel branches are scattered over the floor. Laurel crowns are the mark of martyrdom in classic art, and the leaves fill the church with the fragrance of spring. In the tomb, Easter arrives.

And, of course, it is this knowledge of the resurrection that gave the martyrs their courage and causes the church to celebrate the anniversaries of their death as heavenly birthdays. Rome's favorite martyr, after the apostles, is no doubt the deacon Lawrence. In Rome one can visit the sites of his imprisonment, trial, execution and burial, and churches dedicated to the saint appear four times on the stationary itinerary. His death was gruesome—burning over a gridiron—but Lawrence is best known for the jest he fired off in the midst of his execution, telling his tormentors, “Turn me over; I'm done on that side.”

That story, too, is one of Easter conversion, and not just because the persuasive deacon was reputed to have converted his jailers while under arrest. The jest shows the changed perspective that comes from Easter faith, turning the worst-case scenario into a cause for levity. This change in perspective one sees, in a different way, in the preternaturally large eyes of the saints in Sts. Cosmas and Damian's mosaics—my favorite in the city—eyes that show the awe of having gazed upon the risen Lord. The liturgies of Lent and Easter, like the churches themselves, are built upon the conviction that the resurrection changes everything. Christ did not come to leave us as we are.

Mystery

And still, they are built equally upon the conviction that he came into this physical world of ours, that he chose and chooses to act through the material stuff of this earthly life. Liturgy arises—stationary liturgy, in particular—out of a sacramental sensibility, the conviction that because God has taken on earthly flesh, the concrete and tangible matter a great deal.

This sacramental sensibility—in contrast to the virtual reality of modern life and the abstraction of too much the-

ology—is the second great lesson whispered with each step of the station pilgrimage. A misreading of Christian worship would see liturgy mostly as a means of teaching moral or dogmatic lessons—important aspects of our religion, to be sure, but not its core. Instead, the liturgy puts us into contact with something that cannot be taught but must simply be experienced, what Odo Casel called the *mystery* of Christian worship, using a word that in the early days was interchangeable with what we call “sacrament.” Mystery means the difference between knowing someone and memorizing his CV.

As one of the forefathers of Rome’s station liturgy, St. Leo the Great, put it in his sermon on the Ascension in 445, “What was visible in our Savior has passed over into his mysteries.” To be a Christian means not just doing what Jesus taught but loving Jesus. To understand the difference, imagine your husband or wife suddenly replaced by another equally nice person with identical ethical commitments. I am guessing you would find something a little off.

We human beings are made up of a myriad of indefinable, though not intangible, specifics, the particularities that make us who we are; the Incarnation means that Jesus was, too. And all these personal somethings have become the medium through which we encounter God. At a distance of 2,000 years, we cannot experience the taste and smell of sharing charred fish with Jesus on the shores of Galilee, but that does not mean the reality of such moments has ceased to matter. We just experience it somewhere else. As St. Ambrose realized, “I find you in your mysteries.”

The early Christians built altars over the bones of the martyrs—who were not just legendary figures but first their friends—because in addition to drawing lessons from their lives they felt the need to be near them, too. This incarnational sensibility undergirds some of those Catholic practices—like the station pilgrimage, venerating relics, crowning statues, burning incense—that strike others as strange. A few, to be sure, actually are strange: I am told, for example, that a cupboard in St. Mark’s Basilica off Piazza Venezia holds a reliquary containing a vial of “the darkness that covered Egypt.” But this strangeness arises because being human means walking some convoluted roads, and embracing humanity means sometimes embracing a few oddballs, too.

Rome’s station churches are replete with both quirks and sublimity: the dawn like a spotlight on Michelange-

lo’s “Moses” or the honey-colored onyx used instead of glass in the windows of St. John Inside the Latin Gate or the Cosmatesque floor of St. John Lateran—“Cosmatesque” being the design technique developed in the Middle Ages that wove shards from Rome’s many-colored marble ruins into elaborate geometrical designs. If I had to pick an image to express the arc of the season—from Lent to Easter—near the top would be that gorgeous rubble become art.

Or maybe it would be the apse of the Basilica of San Clemente, the station church on the day it snowed, a mosaic of the cross becoming the tree of life, its tendrils swirling across the half-dome, interspersed with tiny figures from daily life: shepherds, fishermen, hunters, monks illuminating manuscripts, a page carrying a torch, a brother serving wine, angels here and there, birds of all varieties, deer drinking freely from flowing streams. Vines in another mosaic, curling up the arches of St. Praxedes on Monday of Holy Week, bring San Clemente back to mind. The pilgrimage is a bit like tracing those vines back to their beginning, through the layers of history and the turns it has taken—back into an eternal future.

Our stories are there now, too, among the intersecting branches, and at their root is another garden, another journey that began in the darkness of an early, far sadder, morning and ended and began anew in the disorienting joy of what at first seemed a cruel jest—oh happy mix-up—when Mary Magdalene realized she was not talking to the gardener after all.

Anthony R. Lusvardi, S.J., is studying sacramental theology at the Pontifical Atheneum of St. Anselm in Rome. His short stories and essays have appeared in a number of journals, most recently in *Dappled Things* and *The Dalhousie Review*.

Prayer and the Press

A conversation with John Dickerson

Edited by Ashley McKinless

John Dickerson is a veteran journalist of U.S. politics, the host of “CBS This Morning” and a lifelong Catholic. On a recent episode of “Faith in Focus with Fr. James Martin, S.J.,” produced by America Media, Mr. Dickerson spoke with Father Martin about his favorite ways to pray, the importance of humility in journalism and how he hopes to pass on the gift of faith. This text has been edited for clarity.

Has your journalism career deepened your spiritual life or changed it in any way?

I recently had the opportunity to be in Charlottesville, speaking with some residents in public housing.... It was great for me because it is the kind of interview I do not get to do very much anymore, which is talking to real people at length in a more easy atmosphere. And what you are reminded of is our common humanity, which gets squeezed out in the political conversation and, particularly, on social media.

Also, being a journalist now, particularly one in the public realm, is the best check on your humility. Because a lot of times on Twitter and social media you get attacked. And if you try to understand why you are having a strong reaction to those unfair attacks, the answer is often pride. My really strong reaction to attacks is usually a reminder that—even if what they are saying is wrong—I need to recalibrate where I am in terms of how proud I am about what it is that I do.

You have talked about Mass before as something that grounds you and keeps you humble. How does that happen?

It is a very intimate space for me: Here I am; all the artifice has gone away. Here are my problems. Here are the things I am grateful for. Here are the people I am praying for. Here are the parts of our world that I would like to pray for. The person at Mass is as close to whoever I am as I am—and I am

also trying to figure out who that person is. That sometimes happens in church. It happens in prayer.

It sounds like you are bringing what Thomas Merton would call your true self to Mass but also feeling God inviting you to become more of your true self.

Before I started at “CBS This Morning,” I used to have an actual regimen that I quite liked. I would usually read a chapter of Merton’s *New Seeds of Contemplation*, and then I would write afterward. In the morning, thoughts come more clearly to me than they do later in the day. And so it was this very special time for me to be more meditative about ideas. Writing is the way I understand anything or wrestle with things. I try to fix it on the page and think: That is what I believe.

What have your children taught you about your faith?

First of all, I am glad they are asking questions about faith because it means they want to know. That is basically what my kids have done for me in a whole host of things. Why do you believe what you believe? Why do you treat people the way you do? Why should a person do the right thing when nobody is watching?

And I have tried to come at their questions in various ways. I have told them something like: “Even if you decided not to be religious, it turns out this is a great way to live your life. Even if you don’t sign up for the whole Catholicism thing, live gratefully, humbly, caring about other people.



All journalists should be humble because we are so often wrong. ●●

Just read the Beatitudes, kids, and then we'll talk."

My faith orders my life. It helps me a lot. And I want to show my kids that because I want to give that gift to them. It was a gift that my parents, that my mother, in particular, gave me through God. So I want to give them that same gift.

You have talked about how your work influences your spirituality. Do you find that you bring your spirituality into your work?

All journalists should be humble because we are so often wrong. Einstein had a really good record of being right about a lot of things. But he was really wrong about huge chunks, and I am no Einstein. But the point is that in scientific inquiry, you have a theory, and you test it, you test it, you test it. And when you are proved wrong, it is not, "Oh, you idiot." It is: "Oh, that's wrong. Now we go over here." You want to be as humble as possible because then you do not miss the chance to discover something new.

In terms of journalism, both in the way you treat people but also the way you just look at things, you want to be humble and make sure you are not bringing your own hot take to something—that you are evaluating things on the merits and in the moment.

And I have disordered affections in the personal realm and in the news realm. I have covered a lot of campaign politics and the chase and the drama of American politics. And that is really important, but we need to recalibrate the kinds of stories

we cover because there are big, longterm problems that are affecting lots of people that do not get the kind of coverage they need to and do not get addressed in the public sphere the way they need to. And my faith pulls me to try to be better at that.

Do you feel called to be an advocate for the poor on television?

The word advocate is a little tricky because the job of a reporter is to be neutral. It can also be an impediment to understanding for people if they feel like I am being an advocate because this issue is so politicized. Being interested in the conditions of the poor—on health care, for example—people watching or reading that can think: "Oh, well he's for single-payer. He's for public health care for everybody."

That can be an impediment to learning about the underlying issues. How many people are living in conditions of poverty? Why are they there? Is it getting better? Is it getting worse? I think that is an important story—separate and apart from my faith. It is one of the reasons I go to Mass and pray—to be reminded, because you can cruise through several news cycles before you are reminded of what actually we should be paying a little bit more attention to.

Ashley McKinless is an associate editor of *America*.



Watch *America's* full interview at [americamag.org/faithshow](https://www.americamag.org/faithshow).

A Pail of Water

In this playful article, published in the March 19, 1977, issue of *America*, Richard A. Blake, S.J., pokes fun at some of the tropes and viewpoints that defined (and perhaps continue to define) the Catholic press.

At the top of a hill on the grounds of a well-known, but rapidly-going-bankrupt Catholic school, two students met with a near-fatal accident last week. Though authorities refused to reveal their names, they are commonly referred to by the obvious aliases, “Jack” and “Jill.” During morning recess, these students carried a large metal receptacle to the peak of the hill with the alleged intention of filling it with water. Then tragedy struck. Jack fell backward and struck his head. Jill, startled by the sudden disappearance of Jack, also lost her balance and fell. Despite a fractured skull and possible concussion, Jack is reported in stable condition, but no reports have been released about Jill.

Not only is this story noteworthy in itself, but the interest it stirred in Catholic circles is unprecedented. To keep *America* readers informed, a sampling of commentary follows.

Commonweal: The American hierarchy has once again shown its myopia in dealing with the realities of life in the United States, a pluralist society. Having spent millions on the physical plant, they refused to look beyond their own institutional ghetto to the needs of the people and their environment. The lack of foresight and wisdom was total. If they had channeled their resources into the construction of an aqueduct to serve the needs of a society at large, this tragedy would never have happened.

National Association of Women Religious (Official Statement): The callous disregard for the role of women in the church has once more

been demonstrated. The basic thrust of the event and the reports concerning it have revealed the tactics of those in the male-dominated structures in the church to keep women in a subservient role. While we applaud the shared-labor concept in the original errand, we are disappointed that the students in question are invariably designated “Jack and Jill,” never “Jill and Jack.” The constant repetition of the sequence of events—at this point a mere allegation, not a substantiated fact—has been deliberately planned to reinforce the stereotype of woman as follower and thus incapable of exercising a leadership role in society or in the church.

The Wanderer: The tragic events of the past few days have once more pointed out the blatant promiscuity that arose in the church after the collapse of morality in the wake of Vatican II. No doubt the so-called theologians and self-styled moralists would condone or even encourage co-education, which all loyal Catholics have always recognized as contrary to natural, divine and canon law, but the plain fact is that these two victims of the so-called new morality had no business going up that hill together, without a chaperon, in the first place. Many of the sisters (?) teaching at that school are wearing secular dress. It is a sad story repeated so often these days.

National Catholic Reporter: After a thorough investigation, NCR has discovered several circumstances of the recent tragedy that have not been included in official press releases. Buckling to pressure from a lobby of

dentists, school authorities have been encouraging students to carry water from a nearby spring. The city water piped into the school is flouridated, a process which is thought to prevent tooth decay. When confronted with this theory, the principal refused to give any further information, but, in effect, confirmed it by angrily retorting: "What are you talking about?" The diocesan offices and the local dentists responded in almost identical language, thus raising more than a slight suspicion that a party line had been agreed upon earlier.

L'Osservatore Romano: In his annual allocution to Bulgarian chiroprpodists, Pope Paul VI alluded to "the light of wisdom" (AAS 72, IV, 126, A, iii). This remark was widely interpreted as an expression of concern about the dangers of inadequate lighting in the school where the accident occurred (Gen. 1:4). Others, noting that the accident happened at midday, opined that the Pontiff's words were to be taken as an expression of hope that full circumstances would come to light (Is. 8:20). In a press conference, Cardinal Benelli noted that the statement, although not infallible and irreformable, was authoritative. The American bishops sent a letter of appreciation and congratulations (*Cath. Mind*, LXXV, 1313). The Bulgarians, having expressed immediate concurrence, were unavailable for further comment, (*Pravda*, April 1, p. 1 ed.).

Center of Concern (News Release): In one-sixteenth of the driest surface of the globe, water is valued at \$1.12 a bucket, the equivalent of the gross annual income of nineteen forty-thirds of the people living there. The squandering of this earth's resources, as typified by the spilling of an entire

bucket of water by only two American citizens, is disturbing, to say the least. The fact that the unconscionable accident occurred on church-owned property, and thus with the implicit cooperation of the official church structures, impels us to call for a National Day of Concern. In addition, we urge men and women of conscience to write to his/her Congressperson in support of Federal legislation to regulate water wastage in American schools, public and nonpublic.

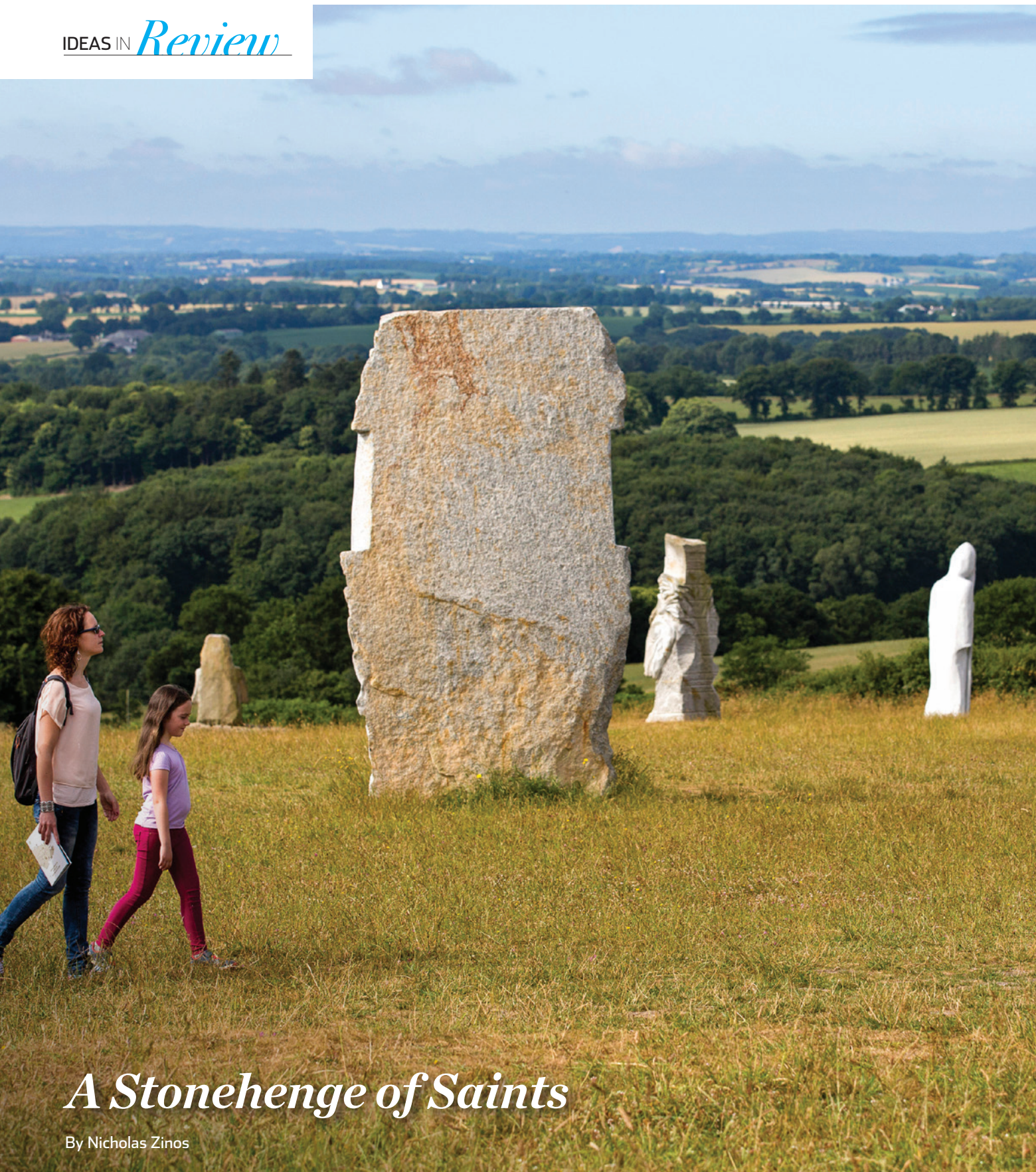
Review for Religious: Seeking and responding to the sacramental elements in everyday experience often present difficulties for even the most attuned souls. If, as initial reports indicate, the pail had actually been filled with water before the accident, then inevitably it would have spilled at the precise moment Jack and Jill were descending the hill. The baptismal imagery of pouring and descent could easily be lost. An experienced director, however, can help an individual to arrive at a higher level of consciousness in perceiving sacramental encounters in the manifold thrust of reality. With suitable direction, the immersion of Jack and Jill can successfully be incorporated into the life of prayer and consciousness attunement.

Andrew Greeley (syndicated column): The tragedy of Jack and Jill could have been avoided if the liberals, intellectuals and bishops had listened to me, period. Click. But no, they were out chasing the latest ecclesiastical rainbow, like Christian Marxism, liberation theology and ethnicity, delete that, return to liberation theology and liturgical dilettantism, period. Click. Ten years ago, my associates and I published a study entitled *Declining Water Tables in the American Catholic*

Schools: A Socio-Statistical Overview, period. But nobody cared, period. Now, perhaps they will, period. But it's too late, period. Click. Tough luck, Jack and Jill, period. Click.

America: The inability of experts to agree on a definition of "hill" that will illuminate all the murky regions of this intricate question should slow down those spokesmen who have already leapt to one conclusion too many in this case. The U.S. Supreme Court should hand down a ruling in the next session and at that time thinking observers will have something to react against. Until that time, as Chesterton says, we will have to raise the question and adopt a wait-and-see attitude (1/29, p. 87). While any definitive statement on the matter is premature, and is likely to remain so, this magazine maintains its steadfast opposition to the use of torture to obtain additional information, unless, of course, it can be established that torture can serve the greater good of society and the long-range goals of excellence in Catholic schools. This would not imply, however, as some observers might lead us to believe, that illegal aliens, escaping repression in their own countries, should be brought in at below-subsistence-level wages to carry water for Catholic and other nonpublic school students, unless, on the other hand, this would provide their only opportunity to escape the poverty imposed on them, at least in part but not totally, by multinational corporations.

Richard A. Blake, S.J., served as associate editor and managing editor of *America*. He is the author of *Afterimage: The Indelible Catholic Imagination of Six American Filmmakers*, among other books.



A Stonehenge of Saints

By Nicholas Zinos



Derennes, Yannick

The Valley of the Saints project in Brittany is an open-air homage to the Celtic saints of Europe. Pictured: St. Rivanone, sculpture by Christophe Le Baquer, assisted by Marie le Scanves, 2016.

Arriving at the western extreme of the European continent, in the region of Brittany in France, one can descry, near the place where land and sea meet, rows of giant stones set in a perfectly straight line, running out toward the sea. These stones are the ancient monoliths that Brittany is so famous for—in Breton called *menhir* (meaning standing stones)—the origin of which is shrouded in mystery.

When the Celts migrated to this region in 500 B.C., the stones had already been here for 1,000 years, placed by a civilization that has long since vanished and of which we know very little. This is the same civilization that constructed the magnificent astronomical calculator known as Stonehenge in the plains of Salisbury, England, just across the channel of Brittany. The monolithic formations have intrigued and haunted the imagination of men and women for centuries and are an enduring tourist destination even today.

It is from these marvels of rock and human ingenuity that today one of France's most spectacular new sites of pilgrimage takes its inspiration. The Valley of the Saints (Vallée des Saints) is a project of prodigious scale, and in 2018, 10 years after the first five-ton statute chiseled entirely from rock was placed on a windy hill in the heart of Brittany, the valley witnessed the erection of

its 100th statue, with plans for hundreds more.

The idea to have an open-air homage to the Celtic saints of Europe, free-of-charge and open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, was the brainchild of Philippe Abjean and a small group of visionaries. Mr. Abjean states in the visitor's guide that what they intended was: "A sanctuary without walls. An open cathedral vaulted by the star-studded sky. And the giant statues now residing in this place, retelling Breton history, belong by right to the Breton themselves."

In this northwestern region of France, the Valley of the Saints interweaves Catholic faith with Breton history and culture. It is a place where anyone, Christian or not, will find a deeply moving testimony to the enduring richness of the local tradition and, more generally, of the Celtic peoples.

The March of the Celts

Although Celts once dominated much of Western Europe, with the fall of the Roman Empire and the invasion of Germanic tribes, Celtic culture and language was pushed to the western extremity of the continent. Having converted to Christianity toward the end of the Roman Empire, the surviving Celts jealously preserved their customs, language and artistic traditions, as is most splendidly evident in masterworks like the Book of Kells. The period between 400 A.D. and 1000 A.D.



A childlike playfulness permeates what is also a sacred place.

was a period of immense flowering and apostolic activity within the Celtic region of Europe. Celtic saints criss-crossed Europe spreading the Gospel and bringing with them many treasures of their own Christian traditions, like the sacrament of reconciliation and the monastic Rule of St. Columba.

Today, Celtic languages continue to survive in Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Cornwall, the Isle of Man and Brittany. This “zone” of Celtic culture is united by a common history, culture and language. These regions are represented in the Valley of the Saints, which as a general rule commissions only saints of Celtic origin or affiliation. The great “St. Patrick,” for example, was the 12th sculpture to be commissioned for the valley and was installed in 2010. He was sculpted, using machine tools and old-fashioned chisels, by the sculptor Jacques Dumas, who resides in the town of Saint-Senoux, not far from the valley.

This talented sculptor also created 10 other saints for the valley over the past 10 years, including Saints Brigit, Samson and Caradec. He and his fellow sculptors are modern day

versions of Michelangelo, Fra Angelico or the great medieval cathedral architects—artists who helped spread the Gospel through visual art. God who became man and took on flesh has irrevocably bound himself to the material world, and through our senses he takes up his spiritual home inside our souls.

In the visitor’s guide, Mr. Abjean states: “Our purpose in creating the Valley of the Saints is to transmit knowledge of our history and culture to the next generation. We are all aware of it: our new millennium is marked by a crisis of cultural continuity.” The Valley of the Saints has done an admirable job in accomplishing this end.

The Valley is a response to a type of globalization that tries to impose uniformity upon diverse cultures and peoples throughout the world. It does not deny that we live in a more globally oriented world, but it does take into account the danger a blind acceptance of this type of globalization can pose. Mr. Abjean continues:

Make no mistake! We are not passing on a dead culture.

We are opening the way for each generation to travel elsewhere, to a different world which will naturally not be the same as before. To remain alive, cultural heritage must be reworked, reinterpreted, extended.... The group of sculptors at the Valley of the Saints have perfectly understood that true liberty is not to deny a heritage. It is to reclaim it so as to be able to continue to entrust it to the following generations.

The committee in charge of commissions sets down a few rules that the sculptors are expected to follow: the size of the final sculpture must be between nine feet and 19 feet tall; the sculpture must not be abstract but actually depict the person of the saint; all sculptures must be in stone; and they must be affiliated with the Celtic heritage in some way. Beyond these rules, the artists are allowed great liberty to shape, chisel and design their works of art, imprinting upon them their personal thoughts and feelings, resulting sometimes solemn and splendid or



The Valley of the Saints project freely mixes history and legend. Pictured: "St. Gonyer," a sculpture by David Puech, 2015.

quirky and playful, but always unique.

One of my favorite sculptures when I visited was the sculpture of St. Maudez, by Christophe Antoine. This popular Breton saint was born in Ireland in the fifth century and graduated from a school in Llancarfan, Wales. He made his way to Brittany where, after having wandered for some years, he settled with two companions on the island that now bears his name. This sculpture was installed in 2014 and measures 15 feet in height. Made from Bignan Granite taken from a nearby quarry, St. Maudez is depicted in a swivel position holding the Bible. Behind the turning body of the saint is, almost imperceptibly, a series of stone steps, large enough for an adult to scale. They ingeniously vanish as they approach the leaves of his book. My children had great fun ascending

and descending these secret stairs.

From St. Brigit to St. Brendan

A list of granite marvels could go on and on. There are many Celtic saints that Americans, especially those of Irish ancestry, will recognize. There is St. Brigit of Ireland, founder of the monastery at Kildare. She is the patron saint of fertility, maternity and breastfeeding and is appropriately depicted with her maternal features accentuated. There is St. Brendan, who is depicted standing on a giant stone whale, a symbol of the numerous sea voyages that he took, and St. Columba, one of the most important saints of his time, who ended his days at the monastery in Bobbio, Italy, that he founded.

The Valley of Saints freely mixes history and legend. A childlike playfulness permeates what is also a sacred

place. We know that not all the stories depicted here are true, and yet we can still enjoy them, knowing that miracles can and do happen. What perhaps is more astonishing is that these saints who lived over 1,000 years ago are still invoked and venerated to this day. The men and women who stand on this hill, looking over the rolling fields and valleys of Brittany, have had a lasting impact on history.

For those who would like to visit the Valley of the Saints, I can offer a few practical tips. Yes, there is parking on site. When we visited, many people took their lunch beside their car before venturing to tour the site. But there is also a full-service restaurant and cafe on site, as well as a gift shop and restrooms. If you visit at certain times of the year, you may be able to watch some of the sculptors at work on their granite slabs—chiseling, saw-

ing and hacking away at the stone. Small pieces of the leftover granite are in a small box for visitors to take home with them as a souvenir.

The site is not easily accessible except by car (or bus if you can charter one). The drive from Paris to the valley is about five and a half hours. There are several good-sized towns in this part of Brittany that have plenty of accommodations if booked early, like the beautiful cathedral city of Quimper. Do not be surprised when you see, as you drive farther west, more and more signs and tourist information in French and Breton. The local Celtic tradition is strong in this part of France, and many people still speak the ancient Celtic tongue.

For those who would like to be a part of this remarkable project, it is possible to commission or contribute to the creation of a sculpture, as long as there is some Celtic connection. The cost from start to finish for each sculpture is about \$30,000, and many different individuals and associations have signed on.

After a day spent visiting this “forest of symbols,” as Mr. Abjean puts it, one feels that the benevolent love of God shines forth most clearly on earth through his friends—the saints. And these saints, all different but united in their common faith, continue to inspire and watch over all of us.

Nicholas Zinos is an attorney, bookseller and freelance writer who lives in St. Paul, Minn.

Fine Print

By Leslie Williams

A biker in the checkout line has cursive
on his arm: *He has removed our sins as far from us*

as the west is from the east. In purple ink. His skin's
like parchment from a calf's cleaned hide: soaked,

dried, stretched, then scraped with a crescent-
shaped knife. Treated with lime to make it accept

the writing. All my nights are like papyrus,
drenched in tears, a wash of disobedience

staining my blank ease. How craven,
wretched, wasteful I've been, trusting the sad

needs of flesh, endangering the small animal
of spirit. And yet, a hungry lion

on the veld will prowl elsewhere
if the wind shifts. Save my skin, dear wind.

Leslie Williams is the author of *Even the Dark*, winner of the Crab Orchard Series in Poetry open competition (forthcoming in October 2019). Her first collection, *Success of the Seed Plants*, won the Bellday Prize.



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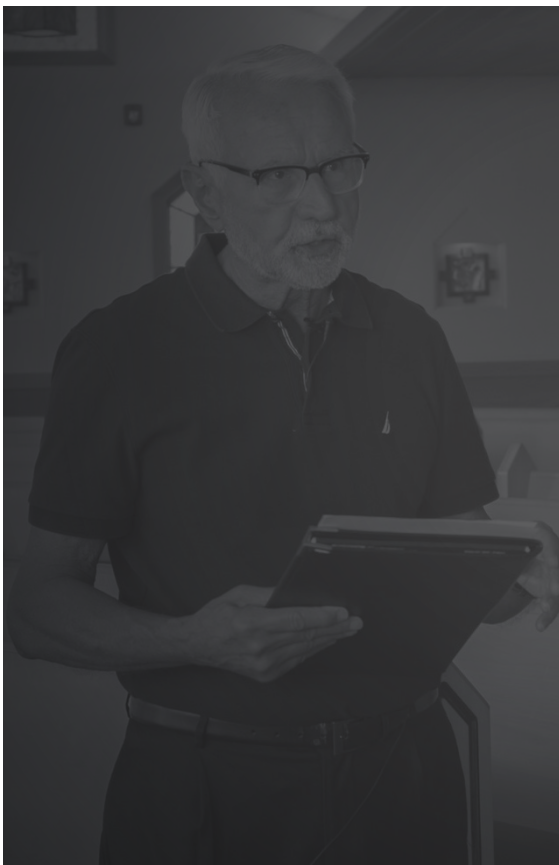
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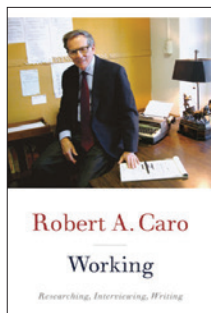
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The nation's most famous biographer

By Kevin Spinale

AP Photo



Working

By Robert A. Caro
Knopf
240p \$25

Robert Caro dreads a particular question: When is the next Lyndon Johnson book coming out? Now 83 years of age, he assures his readers in his newest book, *Working: Researching, Interviewing, Writing*, that he has done the math and realizes the clock is ticking. He realizes also that he most likely will never publish a substantive memoir upon the completion of his final volume on the years of the Johnson presidency. Clearly, Caro is still working as hard as he can, and this rather short book (by Caro's standards) offers his readers some fascinating glimpses into the work that has defined his life.

Unknown, worryingly broke and uncertain whether or not he would ever publish his biography of Robert Moses, Robert Caro earned a spot to work in the Allen Room at the New York Public Library. When asked the dreaded question, "How long have you been working on your book?" by another writer in the Allen Room, Caro offered the truth: five years. The response that came back was an immediate relief to Caro: "Oh...that's not so long. I have been working on my Washington [book] for nine years." Finally, some other writer understood the depth of his toil.

In some ways, *Working* represents Caro's defense of the depth of his work and the many years it takes him to research and write his books. For example, when Caro was researching *Path to Power* (1982), the first Johnson volume, he was intrigued by a detail about Johnson's life when he first arrived in Washington, D.C. Estelle Harbin, who worked as a congressional aide alongside Johnson, remarked that Johnson

arrived each morning on Capitol Hill out of breath because he had been running. Though he walked Johnson's route to work for weeks, Caro could not figure out why exactly Johnson finished his commute to work with a run up Capitol Hill.

Then Caro realized that he had not walked the route at the time when Johnson would have. So, he began walking it just after sunrise (because those who grew up in the hill country of Texas would have awoken with the sun). Caro discovered that in the early morning, sunlight struck the white marble of the Capitol building and created the impression that the entire facade was ablaze. Each morning, Johnson had been exhilarated by the sight.

Caro explains: "And then I had found a way not to lecture the reader on the contrast between what Lyndon Johnson was coming from and what he was striving toward, and how that contrast explained the desperation, the frenzied, frantic urgency of his efforts—a way not to tell the reader but

to *show* the reader that point instead.” Having detailed the grinding poverty of Johnson’s home region, Caro was able to offer some insight into Johnson’s desperate desire to escape the place where he was born. Caro’s insight into Johnson and the way it developed also help account for the thoroughness of his work.

Most gripping, however, are the circumstances surrounding several interviews that Caro managed to conduct in researching Johnson’s life. In a way, these interviews might be motivation for Caro to tell his own story in *Working*. Age and frailty seemed to inspire surprising honesty in the old men Caro has interviewed. While trying to piece together how, in 1940, Johnson had garnered a disproportionate amount of influence over his more senior House colleagues, Caro interviewed a wealthy Texan who he thought had bankrolled Johnson in such a way that Lyndon Johnson, only four years in Congress, was able to dole out money to other congressional Democrats. George Brown had refused all interviews in the past, but Caro finally persuaded Mr. Brown to commit to an interview by offering a rather frank surmise of his brother Herman Brown’s legacy: “In a few years no one is going to know who Herman Brown was if he’s not in the book.”

The next day, George Brown met Caro and told him quite frankly that Johnson had arranged for George and Herman Brown to receive hundreds of millions of dollars in government building contracts during Johnson’s years in public life.

Caro pursued another rather old

man to collect evidence on the disputed Senate election of 1948. Feeling he needed definitive proof about whether or not Johnson stole the election, he sought out Luis Salas, the presiding election judge in Jim Wells County for the election of 1948. Caro found the 84-year-old Salas in 1986. Salas told Caro that, as he was tabulating the vote, “If they were not for Johnson, I made them for Johnson.” Salas called 200 of 202 votes in Box 13 for Johnson, and he had lied about it under oath before Congress when the election was investigated. Salas handed Caro a manuscript that explained the incident and said, “Everyone is dead except me, Robert. And I’m not going to live long. But Box 13 is history. No one can erase that.” Caro was satisfied. Johnson had indeed stolen the election.

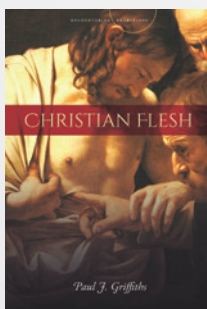
But the most striking moment among the interviews that Caro describes involves Lyndon Johnson’s brother, Sam Houston Johnson. Caro writes that for years, Sam Houston walked around their home region in the Texas hill country telling great tales of his family. He was an overbearing drunk. Then, Sam Houston had surgery for cancer which left him debilitated. Sensing an opening, Caro arranged for them to meet at the Johnson homestead after the National Park Service had closed up shop for the day.

He had Sam Houston sit in a chair at the table in the dining room. The evening light shone through the room. Caro sat behind Johnson’s brother and asked him tell him about the terrible arguments between Lyndon and his father. Sam Houston sat at the table and began to describe the fights—

haltingly at first. Caro sat in silence as Johnson’s brother revealed what it was like to be at that dinner table. And, when Sam Houston had exhausted himself, Caro told him, “Now, Sam Houston, I want you to tell me again all those wonderful stories about Lyndon when you both were boys, the stories that you told me before—just tell them again with more details.” Johnson’s brother sat in silence. Caro then tells Sam Houston again, “Tell me those wonderful stories.” Johnson’s brother replies, “I can’t.” When Caro asks why not, Sam Houston Johnson replies, “Because they never happened.” Armed with such revelations, Caro went back and re-interviewed many others, and his account of Johnson became more “coherent—and closer to the truth.”

Throughout his works, Robert Caro has long argued that power does not so much corrupt as reveal. When one attains power, the exercise of power reveals who that person is. Perhaps a corollary to this claim, evident in *Working*, is: Old age serves to inspire a frankness, an openness and an honesty that help reveal what was kept hidden or understated throughout one’s life. Caro’s readers, the current reviewer among them, are profoundly grateful that he has followed the example of many of the men and women he has interviewed over the years and, in his old age, offered an honest account of what his research and writing have been like over the past 55 years.

Kevin Spinale, S.J., a doctoral candidate in English education at Teachers College, Columbia University, is the moderator of the Catholic Book Club.



Christian Flesh
By Paul J. Griffiths
Stanford University
Press
153p \$24.95

To eat, dress and caress

Paul J. Griffiths's latest book, *Christian Flesh*, aims to provide a speculative account "of human flesh in particular and Christian flesh in particular." Its chapters depict speculative—and so possibly and probably, Griffiths confesses, inaccurate—thumbnails of what human flesh is like under sin's damage, what it might be like (again) when it is not so damaged, how Christian flesh cleaves to that of Jesus, and what it might mean for that flesh to eat and dress and caress. A speculative sketch of these, Griffiths thinks, creates a thought-icon of what it is like to be Christian.

His conviction throughout is, I think, scriptural: that nothing is accursed if everything is made new.

Most provocative are Griffiths's claims about the same-sex caress, which advocate a "liberal" position from illiberal premises. Same-sex caresses, although damaged, are not obviously a corruption of (also damaged) heterosexual sex. Why presume that sex is the goal toward which all fleshy caresses tend? The caress shared between the faithful and Christ's body in the Eucharist does not have copulation as its end, after all. Neither does the eye-to-eye gaze.

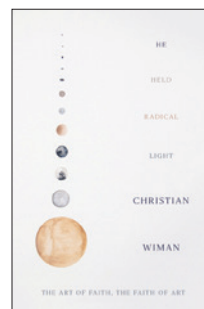
Better, Griffiths thinks, to remove caresses like these from "the category of the sexual." Doing this means at once to affirm the church's restriction of sex to heterosexual sex and to embrace the same-sex caress as, well, something else.

Among the caresses Griffiths does not consider are those shared between the living and the dead. Sometimes, that is, we revere the bodies of the dead—typically that of the holy dead. Necrophilic caresses like these figure everywhere across the Catholic tradition, but they are rarely conceived theologically. What is it for me, I wonder, to press my lips against the traces St. Thérèse leaves behind, with her discarnate soul there above and her corpse and my flesh here below? Here Griffiths offers fellow pilgrims bearings—but no maps.

Griffiths remains among our very best speculative Catholic thinkers, vanishingly few though they (now) are. He wears this laurel in studied imitation of St. Augustine: as a gorgeously overheated stylist of his native tongue; as a phenomenologically attuned and prurient cosmos-lover; as an eye-to-the-main-chance polemicist.

Christian Flesh is Augustine-like, too, in its likelihood equally to provoke or to edify, which proves Griffiths's book a work of theology. As that, it dazzles. Read it, then read it again.

Justin Shaun Coyle is a doctoral candidate in historical theology at Boston College.



He Held Radical Light
By Christian Wiman
Farrar, Straus
and Giroux
128p \$23

There goes rhymin' Wiman

"Nothing prisons truth so quickly," writes Christian Wiman in *He Held Radical Light*, "as an assurance that one has found it." Our notions of where goodness is can be upended like that. The Holy Spirit is often exactly where you don't think it will be.

In *Radical Light*, Wiman, a poet and professor of religion and literature at Yale, is plundering the question of the "art of faith, the faith of art," as the book's subtitle puts it. All easy answers about how spirituality informs the arts and vice versa are given fierce interrogation. Wiman takes neither the operations of God nor beauty for granted.

There is an almost Zen quality to the phenomenon he is describing in this mingling of art and the divine: You must detach from all certainty about how they fit together. A preacher proclaims that a bleak Philip Larkin poem, "Aubade," (puts "ice in the spine," says Wiman) "is exactly how he would feel if he weren't a Christian."

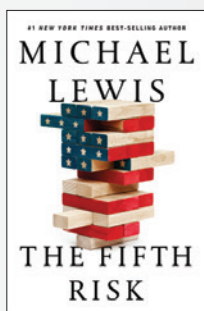
Wiman thinks the preacher is totally off base. "I don't think it's possible for believers to stand outside of the most powerful achievements of secular art and say, 'if only that artist could see what we can

see....” In fact, Wiman point out that an author steeped in nihilism and despair could not write a poem as sublime as “Aubade.”

There is something like the spirituality of St. Ignatius Loyola at work here. One way to boil down the wisdom of the Ignatian approach—which itself has some Buddhist tendencies to it (non-clinging, except to Christ) is to not predetermine where God is. God might be calling us to find him in health, or in sickness, riches or poverty, honor or dishonor, the glory of a despairing poem or even in the despair of a canned spiritual poem.

One of the most gratifying moments of the book comes when Wiman lays out the timeless question all poets and English majors contend with: Why is poetry important? Wiman responds in one of the most concise and helpful statements I have ever heard on the topic. “[A poem’s] truth is irreducible, inexhaustible, atomic,” he writes; “its existence as natural and necessary as a stand of old growth trees so far in the Arctic that only an oil company would ever see it; and just like those threatened trees, its reality ramifies into the lives of people for who it remains utterly irrelevant and/or obscure.”

Joe Hoover, S.J., is *America’s poetry editor, a playwright and an actor.*



The Fifth Risk

By Michael Lewis

W. W. Norton

256p \$26.95

Is government the problem?

One of the most powerful ideas in modern U.S. politics is libertarian governmental nihilism. The bureaucrats, as President Ronald Reagan famously intoned, aren’t a solution; “Government is the problem.” That slogan inspired a generation of conservatives who called for slashing government bureaucracy. In *The Fifth Risk*, the nation’s nonfiction bard, Michael Lewis, makes the case that our government is more important—and competent—than we realize.

“How to stop a virus, how to take a census, how to determine if some foreign country is seeking to obtain a nuclear weapon or if North Korean missiles can reach Kansas City,” Lewis writes, describing the kind of unprofitable government scheme it would be dangerous to abandon or outsource.

The title of this short book comes from a government official’s lists of top risks faced by the Department of Energy. What is the “fifth risk” of the title? “Project management,” says the official, enigmatically.

Lewis reports that President Trump has channeled the small-government movement into an organization concerned with a few resonant issues, like climate change,

advancing the interests of its supporters and personal loyalty. When the Obama administration tried to help Trump transition officials cope with their giant new job, the new bosses of two million federal employees showed little interest.

NASA is the rare government institution that is widely popular. The reason, says Lewis, is that NASA is allowed to market itself and that NASA has heroes. One is Kathy Sullivan, for example, the first woman to walk in space, in 1984. When Lewis finds her three decades later, she’s running the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. NOAA, part of the Department of Commerce, oversees the National Weather Service, collecting and publishing (for free) comprehensive weather data that private companies like AccuWeather repackage and sell.

Trump’s nominee to run NOAA is not a NASA scientist, but Barry Myers, chief executive officer of AccuWeather. Myers, whose appointment is still awaiting Senate confirmation, has lobbied to make the N.W.S. data more opaque, which would increase the attractiveness of his company’s offerings.

As Lewis illustrates, it is one thing if a private firm gets rich exploiting free services paid for by taxes. It’s another if the private firm itself gets to take over the service. That is not what Reagan libertarians had in mind.

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

Frida Kahlo. MCMXLI
México.



Frida Kahlo, Self-Portrait with Red and Gold Dress, 1941. © 2018 Banco de México Diego Rivera Frida Kahlo Museums Trust, Mexico, D.F. / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

Frida Kahlo's Catholic art

By Angela Alaimo O'Donnell

If one picture is worth 1,000 words, how many is an object worth?

In recent years, projects like the British Museum's "A History of the World in 100 Objects" have demonstrated that every artifact has a story to tell. The Frida Kahlo exhibition currently at the Brooklyn Museum through May 12, "Appearances Can Be Deceiving," features over 300 items belonging

to Kahlo, and the resulting chatter within the mute galleries is loud.

Like Frida herself, each of these objects—ranging from paintings to photographs, articles of clothing to jewelry, nail polish to lipstick tubes, corrective corsets to prosthetic limbs—cries out for the viewer's attention, telling us some piece of news about Kahlo we had likely not known

before: that she repurposed her medicine bottles to carry tequila; that she cultivated her famous unibrow and faint mustache in defiance of the standards of beauty enforced on women by a patriarchal culture; that even as she insisted upon her independence as a woman and an artist, she was obsessed with her husband, Diego Rivera; that she could as readily don a man's three-piece suit as dress in traditional Mexican women's attire and still manage to be beautiful.

There is an intimacy about these objects. They expose aspects of Kahlo's private life, including her physical deformity (which she went to great lengths to disguise), her chronic pain (the result of a bus accident at age 18 that broke her spine and shattered her right leg—the same leg that had been afflicted by childhood polio) and her frank sexuality (her passion for Diego, her rage at his philandering and her own love affairs with both men and women). To walk among these objects is to take a tour through Kahlo's psyche and, inevitably, to feel like an eavesdropper and a voyeur.

Yet, at the same time, these are confidences Kahlo herself would likely not mind sharing. Her paintings, the vast majority of which are self-portraits, are rife with self-revelation, stripping away the facade of propriety to reveal the "real" Frida beneath the frippery, the bangles and bobbles, and the artfully applied makeup that decorate but do not define her. As a result, the viewer experiences a binocular vision of Kahlo—two distinct images, that of her private self and that of the carefully curated self she presented to the world, that gradually merge and meld into one.

For the Frida Kahlo fan, there is a sacred aura about this assemblage of objects, many of them borrowed

from Kahlo's home, the famed Casa Azul in Coyacán, Mexico City, a site of pilgrimage as the place of Frida's birth and death and where her remains now rest. These are relics belonging to St. Frida, canonized by millions of devotees, a world-wide cult that has conferred on her an unofficial status as patron saint of women artists.

And an unlikely saint she is. Kahlo, born to an a-religious German father and a devoutly Catholic Mexican mother, was raised Catholic but later rejected her religion. The photograph of her first Communion taken by her father, Guillermo Kahlo (a professional photographer whose remarkable work is featured in the exhibit), speaks volumes. Frida appears devout in her white dress and veil, but on the back of the photo she later scribbled a word that needs no translation, "*Idiota*."

Despite her abandonment of her childhood religion, however, Kahlo's work is the product of a deeply Catholic imagination. Chief among the Catholic elements of Kahlo's art and worldview is her reverence for the body, especially the broken body, and her assertion of its holiness despite its imperfection. In her paintings and sketches, Kahlo depicts herself with frankness, self-knowledge and affection, qualities that are fully evident in "Las Apariencias Engañan" ("Appearances Can Be Deceiving"), the piece that serves as inspiration for the Brooklyn exhibit.

In this revealing drawing, her dress—a voluminous skirt designed to hide her ruined body and corrective appliances—is transparent, allowing the viewer to see her in all her vulnerability. A stream of blood trickles from her pelvis down her wounded leg, while her healthy leg is tattooed with blue butterflies; her cracked spine

is replaced by an iron bolt, and she wears a plaster corset to keep her back straight. (In a tender gesture, Kahlo painted these appliances, transforming symbols of ugliness in her life into objects of beauty.)

There is an element of the monstrous here, as though Kahlo were an invention akin to Victor Frankenstein's creation, an unlovely amalgam of flesh and technology. Yet this is a self with a sensitive soul, as well as a woman whose sexuality is uncompromised by the decidedly un-erotic equipment that makes and keeps her whole. This is the inviolate self Kahlo paints, and it is also *ecce homo*—or *ecce femina*—the Woman of Sorrows who must endure the crucifixion of being human.

Her inspiration came from a variety of sources, one of which was the Catholic practice of ex-voto art, offerings to the saints or to God. These small paintings, largely by Mexican folk artists, depict human calamity—accidents, sickness, assault, and murder—rectified by divine providence. Frida and her husband owned over 400 of these, which line the walls of Casa Azul. The afflicted figures are often depicted appealing for divine intervention to rescue them from death and suffering. Saints, angels, God the Father and the crucified Christ appear in the skies, overseeing a world in which the divine is actively present in human affairs.

The paintings are graphic in their depiction of disaster, featuring pierced, crushed and otherwise broken bodies, along with copious amounts of blood. Clearly Kahlo identified with the sufferers, given her own agonies, and in the images one can see traces of her art. Kahlo's paintings differ from the ex votos in that divine figures are absent, attesting perhaps

to her atheism but also to her desire for belief in a world in which suffering might be redemptive.

After the accident that crippled her, Frida spent months in confinement observing herself in a mirror positioned over her bed, painting self-portrait after self-portrait. During this period she wrote: "I am not sick, I am broken. But I am happy to be alive as long as I can paint." Kahlo's moving confession is a reminder of other artists for whom illness served as a catalyst for their vocations—among them Andy Warhol, Flannery O'Connor and Walker Percy. These artists, all Catholics, also turned to art as means of creating beauty amid the fire of affliction, of telling the truth about suffering and of redeeming that suffering by pursuing their calling with religious fervor. They found healing and holiness in their art.

Many objects in the Frida Kahlo exhibition serve to remind the viewer that, despite her rejection of her faith, the child in the Communion dress represents an enduring aspect of her artistic identity. Frida's Catholic formation is evident in her iconic self-portraits, including those in which she wears the traditional Mexican *Resplandor* head-dress, a garment that encircles her face like a halo; in her visual allusions to the central events of the Christian story and Catholic lore; and in her insistence upon the sanctity of the body.

Indeed, if the Brooklyn exhibition were to be renamed "A History of Frida in 300 Objects" (as it might easily be), viewers would find that these artifacts tell a surprising tale, the lasting legacy of Kahlo's Catholic imagination.

Angela Alaimo O'Donnell teaches English literature at Fordham University and is the associate director of the Curran Center for American Catholic Studies.

I Call You Friends

Readings: Acts 5:27-41, Ps 30, Rev 5:11-14, Jn 21:1-19

In this Sunday's Gospel reading, the Twelve receive a second call to discipleship. John crafts a narrative that refers back to accounts early in his Gospel of the disciples' first call, but this time there's a twist. Early in their discipleship, the Twelve were servants of Jesus' mission. Now, after the resurrection, they have become Jesus' friends, and they take up Jesus' mission as their own.

Modern readers might not understand the motifs that indicate the disciples' role as Jesus' servants. They use a title of respect for Jesus, "rabbi" (Jn 1:38). Although we usually translate this word as "teacher," the term literally means "my great one." They also go to his house and stay with him (Jn 1:39), like students everywhere in the Greco-Roman world who served a teacher and his household to pay for their education. The expression "Follow me," with which Jesus calls Philip, also connoted a kind of student-service. In addition to modeling their life after their teacher's example, as we continue to do today, disciples also followed their teacher literally on journeys, providing protection, companionship and strength for whatever burdens needed to be carried.

Although this service undoubtedly had moments of drudgery, it also contained moments of real excitement. One should not forget that the Twelve were likely very young men when Jesus first called them. Some of Jesus' fame likely reflected onto them as they visited towns to prepare for Jesus' arrival (Lk 10:1) or visited them on their own in his stead (Mk 6:7-13) or traveled to Jerusalem to make preparations for Passover (Lk 22:7-13). The disciples were so well known that a slave girl in a high priest's household easily recognized Peter after Jesus' arrest, even though he had been in Jerusalem less than a week. The disciples may have worked as Jesus' servants, but in return they received not only an education but notoriety and adventure as well.

This all changes at the Last Supper. Jesus promises that they will do even greater things than he did (Jn 14:12) because they are his servants no longer, but now friends (Jn 15:15). In this Sunday's Gospel reading, the risen Christ

*'And when he had said this, he said to him, "Follow me."
(Jn 21:19)*



PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

How have you served Christ's mission?

How have you taken it up as your own?

In what way do you see yourself as a friend of the risen Christ?

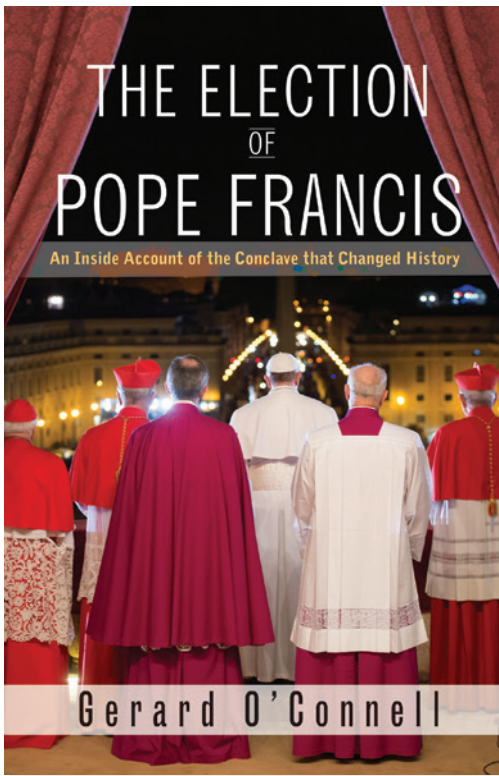
meets the disciples at the Sea of Galilee. Although the setting is the same as Jesus' first call of the disciples, the invitation is now different.

Jesus simply asks, "Do you love me?"

Soon, after the ascension, they will go on mission without his bodily presence but inspired by his Spirit, which remains with them as the gift Jesus promised. This gift confirms their friendship: They will know everything about the man they loved and will be able to act as he did.

This transition from servant to friend continues to occur in the lives of Christ's followers. Many of us remember when discipleship first became exciting for us. Perhaps a retreat, a charismatic teacher or a profound spiritual encounter communicated Christ's invitation: "Follow me." Such service can be satisfying and exciting even on its own, but as the commitment grows deeper, many hear Christ call again, this time with the question "Do you love me?" With their renewed yes, Christ's friends take up his mission with his own Spirit as they go forth to feed his sheep.

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



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Transcending the Noise

Readings: Acts 13:14-52, Ps 100, Rev 7:9-17, Jn 10:27-30

Although this Sunday's Gospel story precedes the resurrection in John's Gospel narrative, it is appropriate for the Easter season because it looks ahead to the day when Jesus' disciples will enjoy eternal life with him. The passage is, in fact, set much earlier, during a dispute in the Jerusalem Temple between Jesus and certain Jewish leaders.

Jesus had gone to Jerusalem to celebrate Hanukkah (Jn 10:22). Although it was not a traditional pilgrimage festival, many Jews journeyed to Jerusalem for the feast because it celebrated something that happened in the Temple. In 167 B.C.E., the Greek king who ruled the land of Israel rededicated the Temple to the worship of the Greek god Zeus. Two years later, a successful Jewish rebellion liberated Jerusalem from Greek rule, and the victors restored the altar in the Temple with an eight-day dedication ceremony.

Even today, the celebration of Hanukkah includes a liturgical reading from the Book of Numbers, Chapter 7. This very long chapter details the majestic dedication ritual of the first altar. At the end of this liturgy, a miracle occurred: "When Moses entered the tent of meeting to speak with God, he heard the voice addressing him from above

the cover on the ark of the covenant, from between the two cherubim; and so it spoke to him" (Nm 7:89). This voice guided Israel to the promised land.

This passage provides the context for Jesus' pronouncement, "My sheep hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me." Although in the Book of Numbers only Moses hears the divine voice, Jesus believed that many would hear the Father's voice speaking through him. Much of this confidence came, one suspects, from the realities of Jewish life in his day. During the revolt against the Greeks, the high priest and many in the temple leadership, who should have enjoyed an intimacy with God similar to Moses', proved to be tools of the Greek conquerors. Ordinary Israelites, by contrast, held firm to God's teaching and remained faithful to the divine voice. Some of the animosity the New Testament reveals between the Sadducees, a priestly party, and the Pharisees, a lay movement, stemmed from this difference. And Jesus likely realized from it that mediators like priests and prophets are not necessary for those who have faith, and he promised his own disciples that those who believed in him would always be able to hear his voice.

This promise continues for Christ's disciples today. The mysterious voice that spoke to Moses from above the ark is the same voice that preached the Gospel and continues to speak to Christians today through the Spirit. But the world produces much noise, which threatens to drown the divine voice completely. To believe that Christ is alive and still at work in the world today requires every Christian to pay attention to the voice that speaks within the heart. The catechism speaks of the ancient Semitic notion of the heart as the "place to which I withdraw" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, No. 2563). The call in this Sunday's Gospel is to create that quiet place in the midst of the world's distractions, where we, like Moses, can hear the voice of God directing our steps to our own promised land.

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

'My sheep hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me.' (Jn 10:27)

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

How do you listen for the voice of Christ?

Where have you encountered it?

How have you responded?

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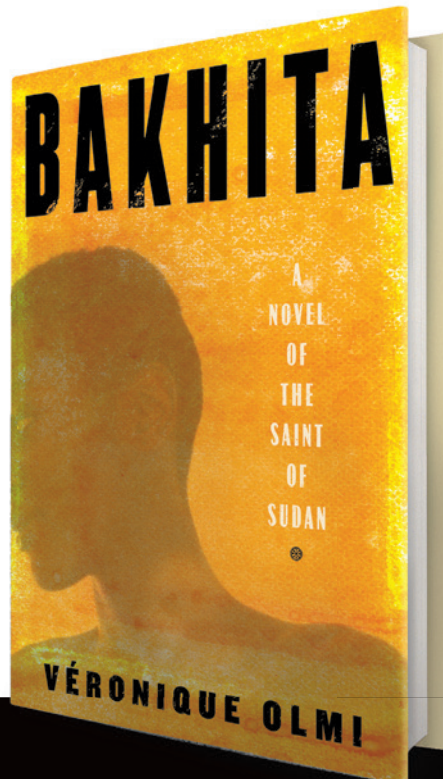
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From Suburbia to Hollywood

Staying Catholic in the city of angels

By Lisa Hendey



Her formal name, *El Pueblo de Nuestra Señora la Reina de los Ángeles del Río Porciúncula*, may have been bestowed upon her by St. Junípero Serra's intrepid missionaries when they founded their pueblo in my adopted home town in 1781. But in the centuries since, many of us Angelenos have learned to call Los Angeles home.

My own homecoming happened unexpectedly a few years ago, when my husband accepted his dream job. During our quick period of discernment, our prayer was simple: "Lord, if this is not your will, please make it obvious." Happily ensconced in suburban life with a vibrant parish family and a manageable mortgage payment, perched on the verge of the empty nest, our lives turned upside down when our yes to God's will for our life brought us to Los Angeles quickly and definitively. As one who loves the beach and anything new, I was excited for our adventure to begin.

But shortly after we stuffed our personal belongings into an apartment that had a third of the space of our old house but cost almost triple our old mortgage payment, the realities of living in this city began to reveal themselves. In a city where "nobody walks," we got rid of a car and committed to an urban lifestyle for the first time in our married lives. A large part of settling in became the search for a new faith home. We frequented litur-

gies at seven of the 14 parishes within a five-mile radius of our new digs. Each church had its own charm and flavors, but all were generous with their welcome and true to what we profess.

I quickly came to know the Westwood Village neighbors I encountered most frequently by sight. But the first to welcome me were not the other professionals or students who shared our apartment building. They were the nameless men and women who dwelt quietly among us on bus benches and in corners and behind alley dumpsters. Almost immediately I felt their presence, such a contradiction amid the vibrant, clean-living wealth I was seeing around me.

Here in the City of Angels, these quiet angels offered the smiles, greetings or requests for simple compassion that my neighbors were often too busy to offer. Their plight ripped at my heart as I tried to compute mentally and spiritually the tremendous contradiction of wealth and need that surrounded me. What can I do to help them? I asked myself and others daily.

One great blessing of being a person of faith here is the omnipresent example of our shepherd, Archbishop José Gomez, and his emphasis on welcome, compassion, service and worship. Being Catholic in Los Angeles means belonging to a faith family filled with need, but also with great commitment and seemingly unlimited potential.

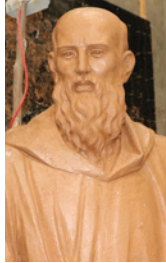
I have learned that it was not only those poor among us who needed Jesus' love. Often the wealthiest people I have met were the ones who were facing the greatest spiritual poverty and loneliness.

Living, walking, working and praying amid so many "angels" has challenged me to understand the hearts of those I encounter and to endeavor to journey alongside them, seeing contradictions less as hopeless obstacles and more as endless opportunities. Here in Los Angeles, church for me is the pews of our parish, but it is also the shelter in Venice; Family Theater Productions in Hollywood, where I encounter faithful storytellers honing a craft; and the Pauline Book and Media center in Culver City, perched adjacent to the 405, that offers coffee and an open door and Jesus always truly present in the chapel. "Church" is the magnificent Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels in all her glory, but also my favorite stretch of sand in Santa Monica where I can praise and witness the brilliance of the Creator. And church is our home, a small but warm place where we can welcome others and shower them with love.

Lisa M. Hendey is the founder of CatholicMom.com and the bestselling author of The Grace of Yes and I Am God's Storyteller.

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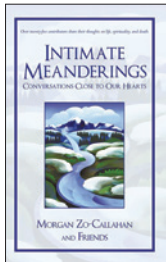


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