

America

MAY 1, 2017
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THE JESUIT REVIEW OF FAITH AND CULTURE

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from Mr. Rogers

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Military Tribunals

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Super-Sizing Parish Ministry

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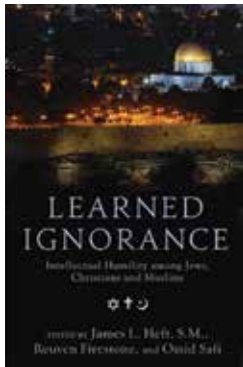
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Learned Ignorance: Intellectual Humility Among Jews, Christians and Muslims

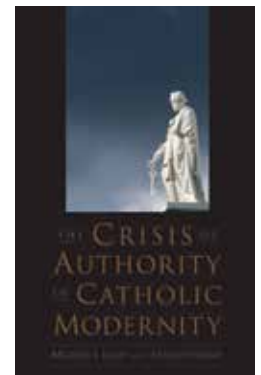
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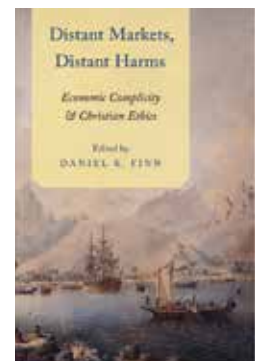
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—Lisa Cahill, Boston College



A Tree Grows on the Marne

It might interest you to know that at least three of the 12 people who have rest areas named after them on the New Jersey Turnpike have some historical association with this magazine. The Vince Lombardi rest area, near Exit 18, is named for the Jesuit-educated Hall of Fame football coach, who, among his many other accomplishments, was a lifelong subscriber to **America**. The rest stop near Exit 7 memorializes our 28th president, Woodrow Wilson, who played a major role in a minor diplomatic kerfuffle that got **America** briefly banned in Ireland. And the stop between Exit 8 and Exit 9 is named for Joyce Kilmer, a poet and essayist whose byline appeared in these pages six times in 1915 and 1916.

Most folks won't recognize Joyce Kilmer by name, but his most famous poem may ring a bell. Many sixth-graders still memorize its 12 simple lines, just as I did, words that will no doubt be heard again at thousands of modest ceremonies this Arbor Day. (Don't bother Siri: Arbor Day is April 28.) The poem is titled "Trees."

*I think that I shall never see
A poem lovely as a tree.
A tree whose hungry mouth is
prest
Against the earth's sweet flowing
breast;
A tree that looks at God all day,
And lifts her leafy arms to pray;
A tree that may in Summer
wear
A nest of robins in her hair;
Upon whose bosom snow has
lain;
Who intimately lives with rain.*

*Poems are made by fools like
me,
But only God can make a tree.*

I confess that I like the poem. I say "confess" because it's supposed to be embarrassing that I do. Most modern critics consider Kilmer's work naïve and saccharin; fine for grade schoolers, but not the sort of thing Serious People read, let alone recite. Not just modern critics either: Ogden Nash, the mid-20th-century master of light verse, once famously parodied "Trees" with a similarly-structured homage to billboards.

Yet John W. Donohue, S.J., wrote in this space in 1993, that while "even mild academic critics turn into werewolves when they consider the popularity of 'Trees,' which Kilmer wrote when he was 23, it is quite possibly the best-known American poem of this century." "Trees" is worth remembering, then, if only because it's a significant pop cultural artifact. But there are other, less familiar, more important reasons to remember the poem, as well as the poet. For one thing, this manifestly theistic work is that of a former atheist whose Christian faith and literary vocation were forged in the crucible of his daughter's losing battle with polio. "If what I now write is considered poetry," he said, "then I became a poet in November 1913," which just happened to be the month and year in which Kilmer became a Catholic.

The faith that had rescued him from his despair also led Kilmer to enlist in the army just a few weeks after the United States entered World War I. One hundred years ago this spring, Kilmer wrote his last words

for **America**, traded in his pen for an M1903 Springfield repeating rifle and sailed for France with New York's Fighting 59th. As important as his faith had been to him at home, he wrote in a letter to his wife, "I think since I have been in France it has done more for me. It has carried me through experiences I could not otherwise have endured. I do not mean it has kept me from fear—for I have no fear of death or wounding whatever. I mean that it has helped me endure great and continual hardships... I cannot forget what made me live through them and bear myself like a man."

An eyewitness report from the Second Battle of the Marne, reprinted in **America** in 1918, says this: "The battalion advanced into the woods to clear the spot of the enemy. In the course of this advance, I suddenly caught sight of Kilmer, lying on his stomach on a bit of sloping ground, his eyes just peering over the top of what appeared to be a natural trench. We called to him, but received no answer. Then I ran up and turned him on his back, only to find that he was dead with a bullet through his brain."

He was 31 years old.

We should remember Joyce Kilmer not just on Arbor Day but on Memorial Day as well. And if one day your child comes home from school, eager to recite the few lines of Kilmer's she learned that day, be sure to tell her the rest of the story; how this simple, faithful poet gave his life for God and country, in a country not his own, beneath trees that only God had made.

—————
Matt Malone, S.J., editor in chief;
Twitter: @americaeditor.



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Pope Francis delivers his Easter message and blessing “urbi et orbi” (to the city and the world) from St. Peter’s Basilica on April 16. (CNS photo/L’Osservatore Romano) Cover: Google Maps

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Who has the most influential moral voice in the United States?

At a time of increasing polarization and fractured institutions, **America** asked a sample of readers who they think has the strongest moral influence in the United States today. A clear frontrunner in the minds of our readers was the category “activists and community leaders,” which won 43 percent of votes, followed by leaders in the media (20 percent).

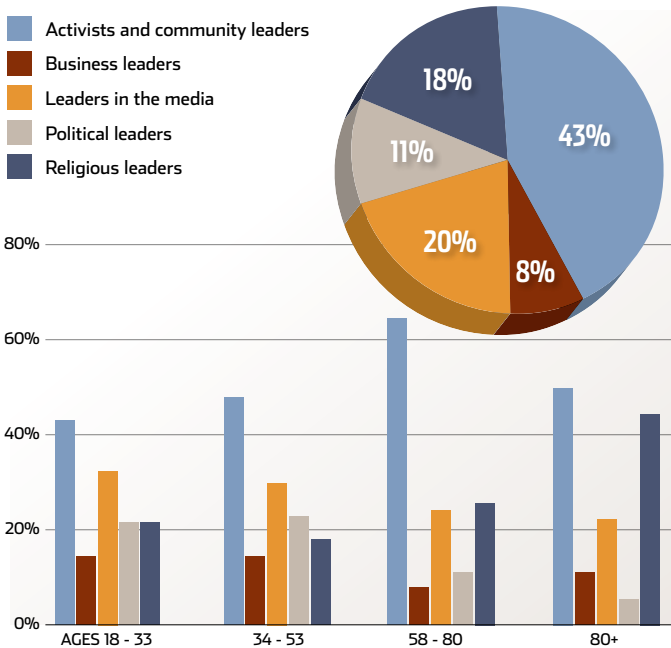
When asked to explain why activists and community leaders have such an influential moral voice, readers highlighted their perceived authenticity. Liz Burkemper of St. Louis, Mo., said: “People listen to those who are talking the talk and walking the walk. You become influential when you relentlessly and unwaveringly pursue what’s right.” Linda Rooney corroborated this point, commenting that activists “are ordinary men and women with little to gain except the satisfaction of seeing something unjust changed.... It has been activists and community leaders who have called us to examine our consciences.”

While readers between 58 and 80 were more likely than any other age group to think that activists and community leaders currently hold the most moral influence,

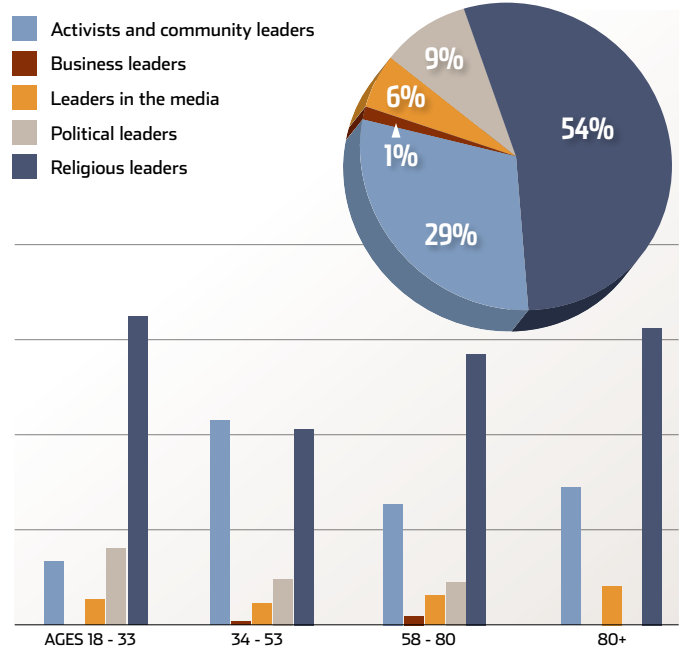
readers in the 18-to-33 bracket were more likely than other groups to judge media leaders as most influential. One such reader from Virginia told **America**: “Media leaders strongly influence people’s ethical views because people hear their messages more often than anyone else. While churchgoing Americans (who are declining) hear the messages of religious leaders about once a week.”

Although many readers praised the influence of community leaders and activists, when asked who they would choose to have the utmost moral influence in the United States, most readers (54 percent) said religious leaders. One reader explained: “The church has a prophetic role to be a moral guide for society... I would certainly look at Martin Luther King Jr. as one of the best examples within this group.” Jeanne LaBelle of Rhode Island also made this choice but noted that there should be no single group with all moral authority. “The moral voice of those that choose good over evil is the voice we need to hear,” said Ms. LaBelle. “It needs to come from all categories.”

WHO CURRENTLY HOLDS THE MOST MORAL INFLUENCE?



WHO SHOULD HOLD THE MOST MORAL INFLUENCE?



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

Unexpected and Uplifting

Re “Seeking Signs of a Catholic Revival in France,” by Pascal-Emmanuel Gobry (4/17): I concur with Pascal-Emmanuel Gobry’s opinion of a resurgence in the urban French church. I recently attended a vigil Mass at the parish of Notre-Dame de Bonne Nouvelle in Paris, expecting it to be full of older Catholics and sparsely attended. The church was mostly full and attended by a wide range of ages and families. Apparently, they are following the new evangelization liturgy. I was impressed with Mass and the parish. This was something unexpected and uplifting to experience.

Ronald Holman
Online Comment

Christian or Not

Re “The Vague Christianity of Folk Rock,” by Teresa Donnellan (4/17): What’s great about art is that it can’t be boxed. What’s great about Jesus is he doesn’t just belong to Christians.

I’m a poet and a lyricist, and I left Catholicism ages ago, yet my work cites Christian, even Catholic themes. It is the work and what is taken from the work that matters. Jesus’ message holds up whether the artist identifies as Christian or not. Artists are merely vehicles.

Richard Wells
Online Comment

Active Humility

Re “An Interview With Rod Dreher,” by Bill McCormick, S.J. (4/17): I have not read Mr. Dreher’s work, but from what he says here, I would say he conflates faith and belief. Whatever one believes, one finds oneself engaged in and integral to this thing we might call life or reality or creation. Faith is a way of engaging that thing, one that is open and trusting as opposed to closed and self-concerned. So whether one is brought to believe something through argument or assertion really isn’t the important distinction.

Faith is open engagement with the *mysterium*. It is a form of active humility and has nothing to do with believing the “right” things, let alone opposing those who believe the “wrong” things.

Kurt Kessler
Online Comment

What Challenges, Confronts

Re “Can Catholics Dissent From Pope Francis’ Teaching on the Family? Wrong Question,” by Peter Folan, S.J. (4/17): Wonderful piece. In humility, I may see things as “challenging”; in ego, things revert to subjective “right” or “wrong.” We are invited to the effort of deeper understanding of what challenges, confronts and even comforts us.

Rosie Klahn
Online Comment

Regardless of Agreement

This article by Father Folan is a good one. In my opinion, it is important to educate oneself thoroughly about a particular teaching, especially if at first we might respectfully disagree with it. By this I mean that one should research, understand and learn the teaching and its underlying principles and philosophy. This applies whether one agrees or disagrees with it, and this means seeking competent spiritual and moral advice.

Michael Barberi
Online Comment

Good Evidence

Re “Opposition to Óscar Romero’s Canonization Was Political,” by José Dueño, S.J. (4/17): This is powerful stuff. One wonders why some can classify the murders of bishops as religious and Romero’s as political—perhaps it is politics itself that shapes their perceptions? This story provides good evidence to U.S. Catholics that the half million undocumented immigrants in this country who came here from El Salvador are fleeing a remarkably tragic country.

Pete Maloney
Online comment

A Great Evil

Re “Confessions of a Porn-Addicted Priest,” by Father John Smith (4/3): I appreciated what another priest said: “It makes me angry to see someone as gifted as you are fall victim to such a great evil.” That’s the kind of human connection we need, not the fake promises in porn.

Kim Mallet
Online Comment

Welcoming the Stranger Means Welcoming New Housing

“Welcome the stranger,” say Americans appalled by the Trump administration’s turning away of Syrian refugees. “No matter where you are from, we’re glad you’re our neighbor,” say lawn signs in English, Spanish and Arabic across the United States. But does that welcome extend to people from just a few miles away?

Escalating rents and home prices have created invisible walls around communities all over the United States. Making matters worse, local governments use zoning laws, density limits, absurd requirements for more parking spaces and “historic district” designations to obstruct new housing where it is most needed, near job opportunities.

Sometimes there is specific opposition to low-income or subsidized housing. In January the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development charged the city of Houston with violating the Civil Rights Act by perpetuating racial segregation in its placement of low-income housing. This is part of a pattern stretching across U.S. urban history.

The lack of affordable housing may be why the “back to the city” movement was so short-lived. New Census Bureau data show that Americans are again leaving walkable cities and gravitating to sprawl areas, especially in the South and West, with cheap land and cheaper homes. This may not always be a matter of choice; there is an oversupply of spread-out McMansions because developers have found it easier and more profitable to build ever-larger houses in locations where they do not have to deal with hostile neighborhood groups.

In addition to contributing to global warming, this trend brings increasing income segregation.

The urban theorist Richard Florida, who once championed the “creative class” as the savior of U.S. cities, now describes a new urban crisis as cities are “carved into gilded and virtually gated areas for conspicuous consumption by the super-rich with vast stretches of poverty and disadvantage for the masses nearby.” He warns of increasing segregation by income level in virtually every major U.S. city.

Mr. Florida argues that we need to reform zoning and building codes in order to add affordable housing suitable for families in stable neighborhoods and to prevent thriving cities from becoming islands of luxury surrounded by seas of resentment. This resentment may have been a factor in Donald J. Trump’s surprising victory in the Electoral College last year, as he swept the “left behind” parts of the United States.

There are signs of progress in addressing the affordable housing shortage. Particularly in the West, the NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard) movement is being challenged by YIMBY (Yes, In My Back Yard) groups that advocate zoning reform and faster construction of housing in economically thriving regions. Last year, the city of Seattle cut funding from the neighborhood district councils that were dominated by older homeowners and that almost reflexively opposed high-density projects, giving more power to city-wide commissions that represented renters, low-income households and the homeless. This move recognizes

the need for new housing not only in fashionable high-rise districts (which often attract foreign investors and do not help to bring down citywide rents) but throughout major urban areas.

And the problem of exclusionary housing policies is not limited to urban areas. The sociologist Joel Kotkin, a proponent of suburban living and a sparring partner for Mr. Florida for many years, writes that restrictions on new housing have driven up costs all across California and have shut off “aspirational migration” by residents of other states looking for better lives. (While California has welcomed about 800,000 international immigrants so far this decade, it has suffered a net loss of 400,000 residents to other states, many chased out by housing costs.)

A truly compassionate and inclusive society must work toward not only universal health care but also decent and affordable housing for all. And that means more Americans must be willing to accept strangers not just at our country’s borders but on our own blocks.

More Violence Should Not Be Our Response to Atrocities in Syria

On April 4, a chemical attack in Syria killed an estimated 100 individuals—including at least 10 children—and injured over 400 people. President Donald J. Trump, who previously argued against direct involvement in Syria, condemned these actions. On April 6, in what many are calling a surprising and confusing shift in foreign policy,

he launched 59 Tomahawk cruise missiles at a Syrian airbase.

In defense of these strikes, President Trump argued that “it is in the vital national security interest of the United States to prevent and deter the spread and use of deadly chemical weapons.” Many, however, are wondering if direct action against the Assad regime is the best response.

While images of the dead and injured in this part of the world may be disturbing, they should not always move policymakers to immediate action. Discernment is necessary to discover what compassion requires. Sometimes it requires attention to suffering while admitting our own powerlessness rather than a response that is not practically or morally defensible. Piling violence on violence is not a strategy for peace; it is a dangerous reflex that could just prolong and broaden the suffering.

There is no clear solution in Syria. But in a joint statement released a day after the chemical attack, Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo and Bishop Oscar Cantú condemned these attacks and suggested a starting point. They urged the United States “to work tirelessly with other governments to obtain a ceasefire, initiate serious negotiations, provide impartial humanitarian assistance, and encourage efforts to build an inclusive society in Syria that protects the rights of all its citizens, including Christians and other minorities.” The bishops reiterated the words of Pope Francis, reminding us that while there is no easy solution in this part of the world, it is our duty as Christians to focus on “a peace based on dialogue and negotiation, for the good of the entire Syrian people.”

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Guantánamo lawyer: Military tribunals are built on American apartheid

The Guantánamo Bay detention camp presents one of the great political, legal and moral dangers of our time. Of the hundreds of men held there over the past decade and a half, 41 remain. Only 10 of those are at some stage of prosecution before the special Guantánamo tribunals, the so-called military commissions. That figure includes five men accused of planning the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

As a senior attorney for the U.S. Department of Defense, I have represented several Guantánamo detainees slotted for trial. I submit that the greatest danger these tribunals pose comes from the fact that they are built upon a form of apartheid. The Guantánamo tribunals are a separate and unequal justice system into which noncitizens have been segregated. That is a precedent that endangers us all.

Two cases going before the U.S. Supreme Court in the next few months challenge the constitutionality of the Guantánamo tribunals on various legal grounds. But the most important question the court will have to answer is whether the war on terrorism has made obsolete the constitutional commitment to equality before the law.

The tribunals are notoriously flawed. Despite costing more than a billion dollars so far, they have yet to produce a single conviction that is not tainted by legal doubt. They have been bogged down for a decade by uncertainty over what the law is and by the exorbitant expense of maintaining an ad hoc court system on an isolated U.S. naval base in Cuba. The alleged perpetrators of the Sept. 11 attacks are not

expected to stand trial until at least 2020, depriving the 3,000 people who died on that day, and their families, of justice for over a generation.

These tribunals are also an embarrassment to American standards of due process. They are subject to routine political interference, are often conducted in secret and are presided over by judges who lack independence. Lax rules of evidence allow for the admission of everything from “hearsay” (legal jargon for rumors) to evidence derived from torture.

I suggest that all of this is possible only because the Military Commissions Act, the law that created these tribunals, limits their jurisdiction to the trial of noncitizens. That means there are 43 million people residing in the United States who are subject to this law. But the terrorists responsible for the massacres at San Bernardino, the Pulse Nightclub in Orlando, Fla., and Fort Hood, as well as the Boston Marathon bombing, are not. Those attacks were all perpetrated by citizens, who must be tried in the real court system, where nearly 500 suspected terrorists have been successfully prosecuted since Sept. 11, 2001.

There are many legal reasons that the Supreme Court should strike down this segregation of the justice system. Most important, though, is that for all the dark periods of bigotry and national danger in U.S. history, this is the first time that we have retreated from the constitutional commitment to equal justice under law that has governed this country since the end of slavery. In fact, in every previous use of military tribunals, including those used to

try Nazis during the height of World War II, citizen war criminals were tried on equal terms with noncitizens.

In his poem on the rise of the Third Reich, Martin Niemöller warned us that illiberalism relies on precedent. “First they came for the Socialists, and I did not speak out—Because I was not a Socialist,” he wrote, as he confesses to keeping silent as they then came for the trade unionists and then the Jews. “Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me.”

The Guantánamo tribunals perpetuate a naïve prejudice that the rule of law is a luxury, a waste of time or a privilege belonging to “us” and not to “them.” This paradigm is dangerous because the rule of law that we depend upon to protect us, to enforce our contracts and to secure our rights is a fragile thing. It depends on a shared confidence in the norms that give judges, courts and law their power to protect us from “them.” As the Rev. Niemöller reminds us, we are foolish if we think that being quiet in the face of injustice will keep us safe and on the inside, that we will remain with the “us.” What we do to the least of our brothers and sisters eventually becomes the rule for us all.

Michel Paradis is a senior attorney in the Department of Defense and a part-time law professor at the Georgetown and Columbia law schools. He is the author of a forthcoming book on war crimes trials in the Pacific. The views expressed are his own and do not represent the position of the Department of Defense, the U.S. government or any agency or instrumentality thereof.



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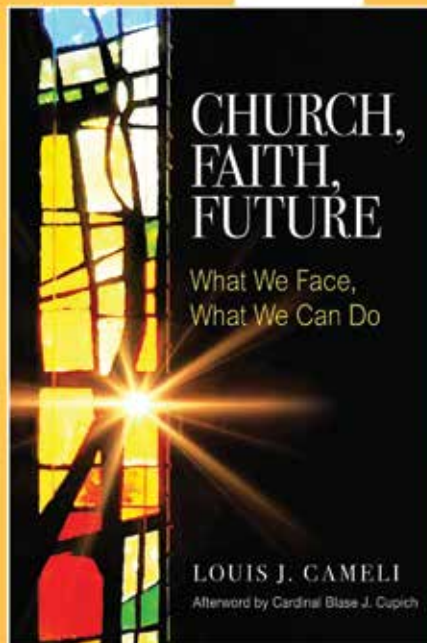
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Cardinal Blase J. Cupich*

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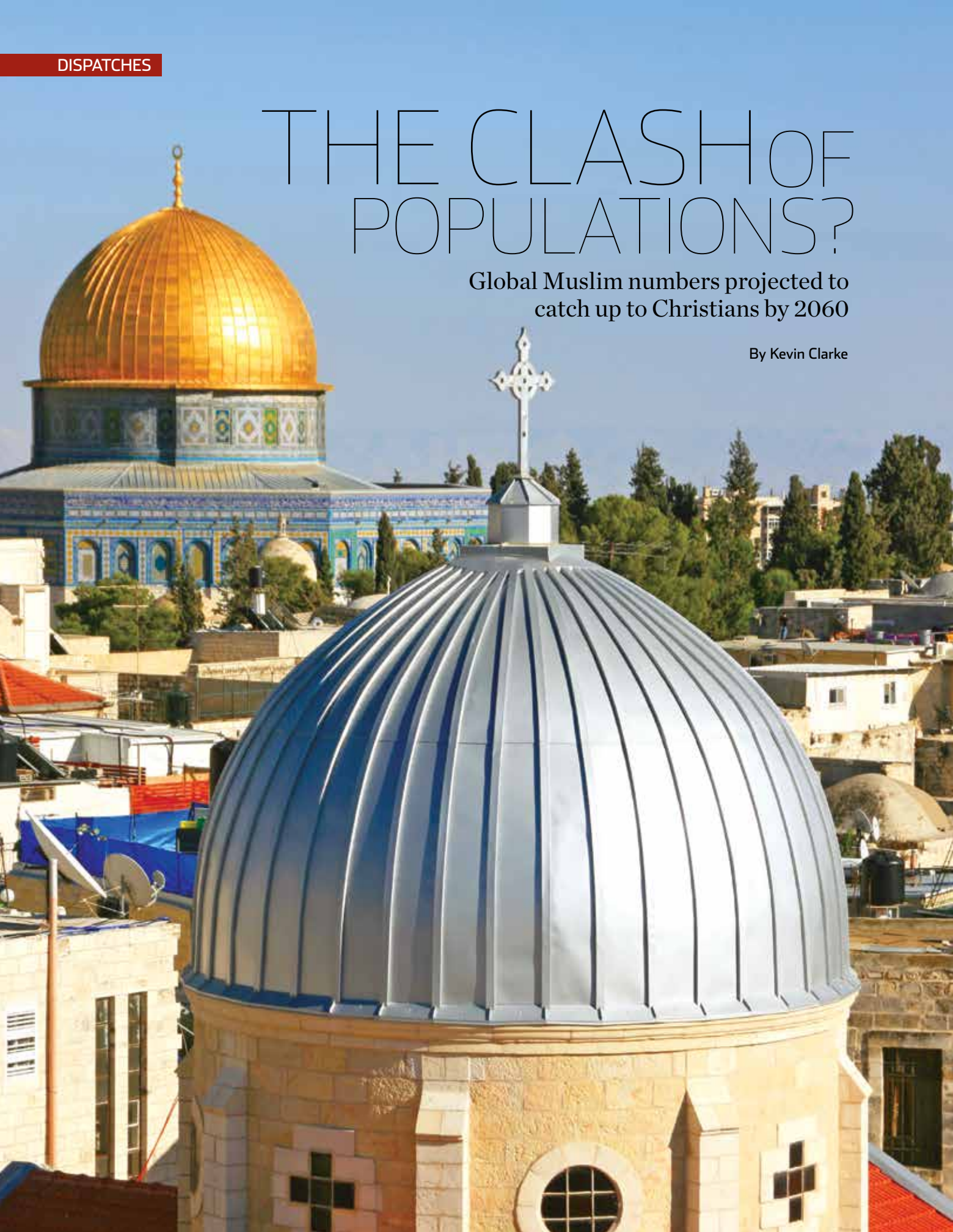
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THE CLASH OF POPULATIONS?

Global Muslim numbers projected to catch up to Christians by 2060

By Kevin Clarke



“Population jihad” is among the preoccupations that trouble some of the darker corners of the internet. Not familiar with the expression? In briefest terms it means that territory not claimed by followers of Islam through conquest or conversion will simply be overrun with, well, more babies.

Those concerned by such matters were fed some new data to stress over in April when the Pew Research Center released a report on the projected population growth of the world’s major religious groups. While Christians retain a hold on the top spot—and will do so for decades—Pew predicts that by 2035 the number of babies born to Muslim parents will “modestly exceed” those born to Christian parents: 225 million to 224 million.

That fertility edge will compound quickly. According to Pew’s projections, Muslims will move from 24 percent of the world’s population in 2015 to a nearly equal population share with the world’s Christians by 2060—31 percent to Christians’ 32 percent. (Christians are currently at 31 percent.)

According to Pew, there were 2.28 billion Christians across the globe in 2015. Among them, according to a Vatican estimate released the same week as the Pew update, are 1.29 billion Catholics—17.7 percent of the global population. The 2015 number represents a 7.4 percent increase in world Catholic numbers over 2010. The Vatican reports the most growth in Africa during that timeframe, up over 19 percent to 222 million. Europe’s Catholic population declined slightly, and in the Americas and Asia Catholic numbers were up by 6.7 percent and 9.1 percent, respectively.

In Europe the Christian population is dying faster than it is being replaced (with a few exceptions, including France and Ireland). In North America, the number of Christian deaths will begin to exceed the number of births to Christian parents by around 2050.

Pew notes: “These trends signal that much of Christianity’s future growth is likely to be in the global South, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa—the only region where natural increases in the Christian population are expected to grow even larger in the coming decades.”

Pew’s projections could be off, of course. Muslim birth rates could decrease in developing nations following the pattern in economically advanced Europe; conversely, Christian Europe could rediscover the joys of parenthood. But if current trends continue, by 2060 the world’s two largest religious bodies should be about three billion each. Will those vying numbers inevitably lead to greater geopolitical tension, as some fear?

There are signs of hope that the “clash of civilizations” predicted by the late political realist Samuel P. Huntington, can still be avoided. Across Iraq and Syria, Muslims are dying in efforts to tamp down the extremism of ISIS. And after suicide bombing attacks on two Coptic Christian churches in Egypt on Palm Sunday left 49 dead, outraged Egyptians of all faiths posted messages of solidarity with Copts on social media, using an anti-ISIS slogan: “Your terrorism brings us together.”

In the United States, a survey from Georgetown University’s Bridge Initiative suggests a hard path to harmony ahead. A Bridge report released in September found that Catholics often have negative or limited views about Islam. More recent analysis produced a further surprise. Young Catholics were not much more likely than older Catholics to know other people personally who were Muslim.

The Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown University conducted the survey. “Usually when CARA looks at Catholic data, there are huge differences by age, ethnicity,” said Mark Gray, senior research associate at CARA. “We don’t see the same differences in this survey that we’d expect. This shows that the attitudes/beliefs are generally widespread across the population.”

The negative views about Muslims germinate from news reports of violence in the Middle East, about the only exposure many Americans have to Islam, said Jordan Denari Duffner, a research fellow at the initiative. Those views are nurtured by fear-mongering on the internet.

Catholics do not hear as often about the millions of Christians and Muslims who coexist peacefully in the Middle East and Muslim-majority nations outside the Arab world, she said. Nor do they hear about Muslim efforts to respond to extremist violence, which has taken a much greater toll on Muslims themselves than on non-Muslims.

Finally, Ms. Denari Duffner added, a look back at the Catholic population’s own history in the United States, where similar anxieties about a Catholic takeover were once stoked by Protestant nativists, offers some needed perspective.

“What our data points to are two things,” said Ms. Denari Duffner. “One, the need for more person-to-person connections and, two, the need for increased religious literacy.” It seems Catholics not only do not know much about Islam or life in Muslim societies, they often do not

know what the church teaches about Islam and other faiths, particularly the church's attempt through the Second Vatican Council's "Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions" to seek commonalities and express esteem for Islam.

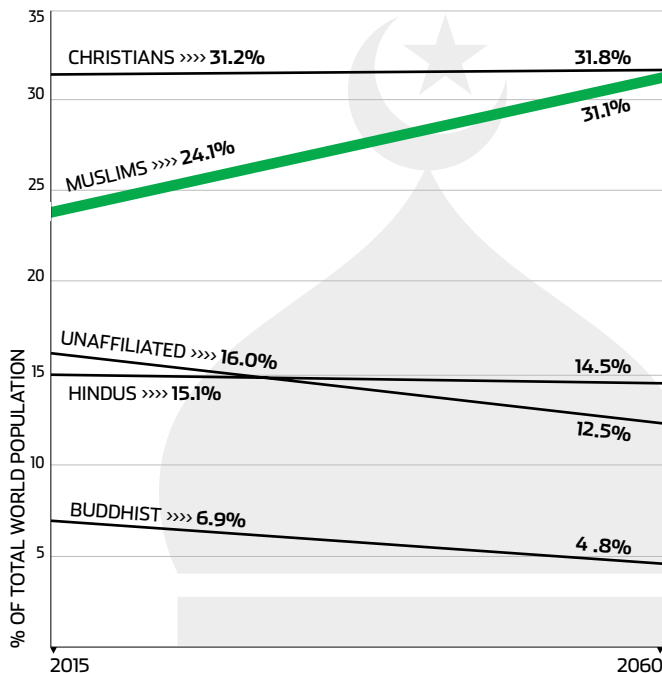
Better relationships with Muslim people as neighbors, friends and fellow community members and better information could help deflect the clash-of-civilizations trajectory too many in the Christian and Muslim worlds seem

willing to accept, Ms. Denari Duffner said.

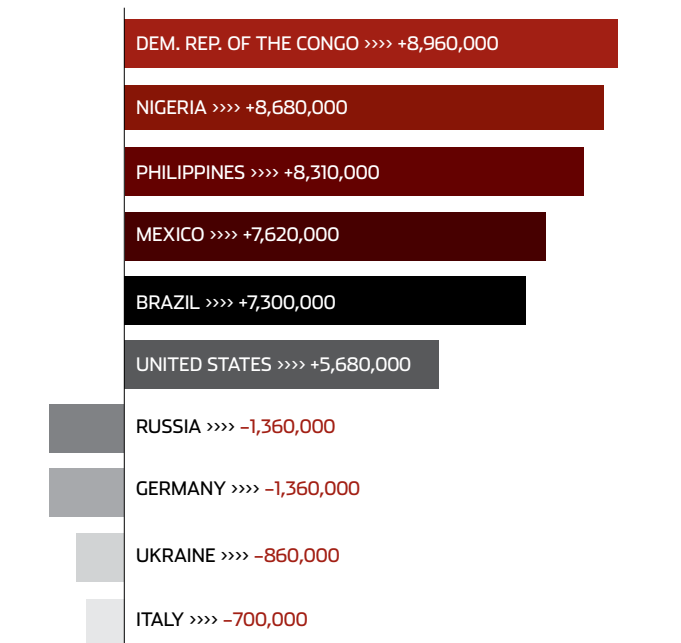
That is, after all, perhaps a self-fulfilling prophecy that Pope Francis has been making great efforts to push back against in word and deed. This year he again included Muslim people in the rite of the washing of feet during the Holy Thursday Mass of the Lord's Supper in Rome.

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

PROJECTED SHARE OF GLOBAL POPULATION



GREATEST CHANGES IN CHRISTIAN POPULATION—2010-2015



CATHOLIC-MUSLIM RELATIONS

66% OF CATHOLICS UNDER 30
75% OF CATHOLICS OVER 60
 DO NOT PERSONALLY KNOW A MUSLIM

GLOBAL CATHOLIC POPULATION

AS OF 2015 THERE WERE **1.29B** BAPTIZED CATHOLICS IN THE WORLD, UP **7.4%** FROM 2010. CATHOLICS MAKE UP 18% OF THE WORLD'S POPULATION

Sources: "The Changing Global Religious Landscape" (2017), Pew Research Center; changes in Christian population refer to the greatest natural increases and greatest natural decreases (births minus deaths). Data on Catholics' familiarity with Muslims from the Bridge Initiative and the Center for Applied Research on the Apostolate; data on global Catholic population from the *Annuarium Statisticum Ecclesiae* 2015, published in April 2017 by the Vatican Press.

A pilgrimage for indigenous rights mobilizes faith communities in Canada

Lots of people know about Spain's El Camino de Santiago pilgrimage, says Steve Heinrichs, director of indigenous relations at Mennonite Church Canada. "But to do pilgrimages in these lands that some call Canada, that's a strange thing." The one Mr. Heinrichs has in mind is unique.

From April 23 to May 14, over 40 pilgrims will take part in a Pilgrimage for Indigenous Rights, a 22-day walk from Kitchener, Ontario, to the nation's capital, Ottawa. The walk, over 300 miles, is designed to bring the struggle and history of indigenous peoples in Canada to the attention of Christian communities.

Organized by Mennonite Church Canada, Christian Peacemaker Teams and a network of indigenous and ecumenical groups, the idea for the pilgrimage emerged as an attempt to raise awareness about the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. "We have indigenous friends who really feel [the declaration] is very important for the Canadian government," says Kathy Moorhead Thiessen, a member of the Indigenous Peoples Solidarity Team at Christian Peacemaker Teams.

"We wanted to do some education of our church people on what *Undrip* is, and on some of the issues that indigenous people in our land face."

Leah Gazan, a University of Winnipeg instructor and a member of the Wood Mountain Lakota Nation, will walk for part of the pilgrimage. She hopes it will send a clear message to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and the current Liberal government that "Canadians, indigenous and non-indigenous, are not okay with the willful violation of fundamental human rights."

Ms. Gazan herself has been an ardent supporter of the proposed bill, C-262, introduced in Parliament last April, which would require the Canadian government to evaluate and revise its laws so that they would be in accordance with the U.N. declaration. Advocating for justice for indigenous

people has been a lonely process until recently, says Ms. Gazan. "I've been at this my whole life. Now we're at a time in history where we have an opportunity to reconcile, and there are Canadians who want to jump on board."

The pilgrimage also responds to calls to action that resulted from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Canada, which concluded a seven-year process in 2015. The T.R.C. documented the experiences of survivors of Indian residential schools, which operated from 1840 to as late as 1996. At these now infamous church-run institutions, First Nations, Inuit and Métis children were forced to assimilate with Canadian life and abandon traditional practices.

The T.R.C. calls for church communities "to develop ongoing education strategies to ensure that their respective congregations learn about their church's role in colonization, the history and legacy of residential schools and why apologies to former residential school students, their families and communities were necessary."

Ms. Gazan says the pilgrimage efforts have already helped her own reconciliation with the Mennonite community, which is prominent in Manitoba, where she lives. Racism against indigenous people can be intense in Mennonite communities, Ms. Gazan says. She points to a history of wrongful settlement by Mennonites on indigenous land without the consent of indigenous people as an unresolved injustice.

Yet, Ms. Gazan says, she sees that Mennonites are trying to come to terms with these issues. "I've seen more on-the-ground action from churches than from the current government," Ms. Gazan says. "The government could look to churches as an example of how to move forward in a meaningful way."

Dean Dettloff, *Toronto correspondent*. Twitter: @deandettloff.

When sexual assault goes viral

Leaving a press conference recently, Police Superintendent Eddie Johnson of Chicago was startled by a mother who showed him screen grabs of a video that had been live-streamed on Facebook. The images depicted the apparent gang rape of her 15-year-old daughter.

The digital content was eventually removed, but not before dozens of people viewed the alleged assault. No one who saw the livestream contacted authorities.

The case is one of multiple live-streamed or recorded assaults that have come to light recently on social media sites. These incidents raise troubling moral and ethical questions. What motivates assailants to brazenly post this kind of content? What is the responsibility of sites like Facebook and Google to monitor these posts and keep them offline? And what are a victim's legal protections?

Shelly Clevenger is a professor of criminal justice at Illinois State University in Normal, Ill., who studies the effects of sexual assault on survivors as well as cybercrime. Ms. Clevenger says assailants are emboldened to place videos like these online because they do not believe there will be consequences. In many cases, they are right.

"People don't think there will be any ramifications for their actions, especially if people are watching this live and it's not being reported to the police," Ms. Clevenger said.

Young adults seem to be the most susceptible to this type of behavior. "Most young kids are very much immersed in social media, so everything seems like a good idea to put online," Ms. Clevenger said. When there are multiple assailants, "group think" sometimes sets in. And young males might view these videos as just another means to brag about their sexual

conquest, according to Ms. Clevenger.

The damage to victims of the assault itself, of course, and its subsequent "viral" exposure is immeasurable. If a victim's name is associated with the assault, the name can reappear in connection with the incident for years to come, even if the video or images are removed, Ms. Clevenger said.

Laws protecting cyber victims are weak, according to Professor Maria Moore of Illinois State University, who studies communications law. The Communications Decency Act of 1996, she said, absolved internet providers of responsibility for such incidents if it can be proved they had no editorial control over the content, have a clear policy for taking objectionable material down and have a mechanism to do so efficiently and consistently.

The question of livestreaming assaults has not yet been contested in the courts to determine how the Decency Act might apply to those cases.

In a statement, Facebook said: "Crimes [like the live-streamed assault in Chicago] are hideous and we do not allow that kind of content on Facebook. We take our responsibility to keep people safe on Facebook very seriously and will remove videos that depict sexual assault and are shared to glorify violence."

The company said it monitors content around the clock. But both Ms. Clevenger and Ms. Moore said that the sheer volume of what appears on social media makes it impossible to intercept every post.

Ms. Moore noted that if a television station aired a live broadcast of a violent assault, the Federal Communications Commission would be able to fine it for broadcasting indecent and criminal content.

"Cable and the internet, however, don't have the same regulatory

standards to comply with," Moore said. "The F.C.C. would need new policy to regulate the activity. As with many issues regarding emerging technology, government regulation and regulatory law lag behind what occurs first in society."

That is of little solace to the 15-year-old depicted in the Chicago video. Her family told The Chicago Tribune that she had to leave her neighborhood because of taunts and threats.

—
Judith Valente, *Chicago correspondent.*
Twitter: @JudithValente.

Andrés Manuel López Obrador campaigns in La Perla, Veracruz, on March 25.

Photo courtesy of lopezobrador.org.mx



Is the third time the charm for Mexico's 'eternal candidate'?

Andrés Manuel López Obrador took the stage on March 26 in Ciudad Mendoza, in Mexico's Eastern Gulf Coast state of Veracruz. He spoke for 45 minutes, a monologue that thundered across the central plaza of this small town through speakers with the volume dialed up to barely tolerable levels.

The undisputed leader of the Mexican left was visibly at ease. He railed effortlessly against Mexico's political elites and viciously derided President Enrique Peña Nieto. He denounced corruption and the selling out of Mexican national industries to foreign companies. He promised grants for students, pensions for the elderly and wealth for the poor. And, without naming him, he mocked Donald J. Trump with a sarcastic wave of his right hand.

As next year's presidential election draws ever closer, AMLO, a popular nickname built on Mr. López Obrador's initials, is seen by many to be the number one candidate to become Mexico's next president. In an unprecedented third try for the presidency—he has been called the “eternal candidate”—early polls give him and his Movement for National Regeneration (Morena) a slim lead in the contest over the ruling Party of the Institutional Revolution and the opposition conservative National Action Party.

An increasing number of Mexicans see him as an alternative to what they consider to be a corrupt and deeply dysfunctional political elite interested only in enriching itself. Mr. López Obrador capitalizes on that discontent by presenting himself as an outsider, even if the 63-year-old is very much a political veteran in his own right.

caption”

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

PARISH IN AMERICA THE LARGEST

Lessons on evangelization from a Catholic megachurch

By Leah Libresco



UNDERGROUND FOOD PANTRY



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COUNSELING SERVICES

St. Matthew uses its ministries and activities to help parishioners find a smaller community within a large church.

“Pat!” Msgr. John McSweeney calls down the hall. Two heads poke out of two offices, and two replies of “Yes?” come back to him. “This is nothing,” the correct Pat says as she walks me down the hall. “We had eight Pats in the office at one point, and two of them were priests.”

A profusion of Pats is one of the simplest problems St. Matthew Catholic Church in Charlotte, N.C., has to grapple with. Thirty years ago, St. Matthew had only 237 registered families, but the church has mirrored the explosive growth of Charlotte and now serves over 10,000 registered households, putting it in contention for being the largest parish in the United States. Meanwhile, according to a 2009 study by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, the median Catholic church in America has 761 registered families.

That means everything about parish administration at St. Matthew has to be larger than usual. Some 600 to 700 children receive first Communion together in a single weekend over four Masses. Up to 21 extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion line up at numbered stations during Mass (each with their own hand sanitizer dispenser). And over 7,000 volunteers help to run 103 active ministries.

SCALING UP

Kathy Barlett, the music director, has been with St. Matthew since the beginning. She got a letter about a new parish in Charlotte and attended the first Mass, which took place in a movie theater while they looked for a permanent home. The musicians for the service were on loan from another parish, and St. Matthew kept asking for volunteers. She felt God prodding her, “You know music, raise your hand.”

She worked as a volunteer from 1986 to 1999, and then took on a full-time role managing music and liturgy. One constant has been the screens; though the church has moved out of the movie theater, it now has large screens on either side of the altar to project lyrics, prayers and announcements during the service. Mrs. Barlett believes the screens help parishioners worship: “[they] get their heads out of the books and they lift their faces up to heaven to sing.”

The ushers that Mrs. Barlett recruits and supervises help the parish keep statistics on their numerous sheep. At services, they stand by the doors with clickers tucked unobtrusively in their pockets, to let them tally the number of people walking through. The headcounts give the parish a way to keep track of ebbs and flows in Mass attendance, as well as to gauge the popularity of other events. The day after I left Charlotte, St. Matthew began a three-day heal-



ing ministry, led by a visiting priest, that it was repeating partly because of last year’s success in drawing people in.

It is just as crowded beneath the church as it is upstairs. In the basement, there is a huge space for food, clothing and other supplies collected through the church’s various donation ministries. “I can’t believe you have a warehouse down here,” I exclaim on the tour, only to be corrected with a smile by Antoinette Usher, the facilities manager. “No, our warehouse is at a different site.” To suit the needs of that location, the church has purchased its own forklift. While other parishes are limited in what they can store or what projects they can take on, St. Matthew strives for an economy of scale that allows it to have something at hand for every need, whether physical or spiritual.

St. Matthew uses its ministries and activities to help parishioners find a smaller community within such a large church. Every one of St. Matthew’s groups is expected to hit three S’s: spiritual, social and service. That means that the pinochle group prays together before breaking out their decks and that members take a spot on the muffin rota for the church-run food bank. (At least one refriger-



ator I find in the complex is marked “MUFFINS ONLY.”)

Mark Shuler began to feel at home at St. Matthew when he got involved with ministry work. He had attended church for a long time, “getting nothing out of it,” but once he started working alongside other parishioners, he told me, “This big church got so small!”

For Brooke Moran, who works with seniors, it all begins with the welcoming ministry. She explains, “The people who come to our group are kind of lost and need to make friends.” Many of the older transplants she meets have moved to be closer to their families, but the move has separated them from their friends and other pieces of their lives. When she asked people participating in the STARS (Seniors That Are Retired) ministry what they would like more than anything else, they said they wished their families would attend Mass with them. “They moved here for their families,” Mrs. Moran says, “but they aren’t coming.”

St. Matthew’s growth forces it to think about how to receive newcomers, but Mrs. Moran thinks other parishes could find this work bearing fruit too. “I’ve been in a dozen parishes, I’ve never seen one that had a welcoming ministry.”

MODELS FOR A MEGAPARISH

St. Matthew has looked outside the Catholic tradition to figure out what comes after the welcoming ministry. According to the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA), less than a quarter of all Catholic churches built since 2001 seat 1,000 people or more, while St. Matthew has room for 2,000. There just are not that many megaparishes to learn from.

That is why Michael Burck, who manages adult faith formation, and some other St. Matthew staff members took a trip to Saddleback, Rick Warren’s evangelical megachurch with more than a dozen sites in California, to see what lessons a Catholic parish could draw from a church that differed in theology but was more similar in size. Mr. Burck was struck by the way evangelical churches are empty during the week and wondered where all their parishioners are going. The parishioners at Saddleback gather on Sunday to have the Scriptures read and interpreted, but for the rest of the week they pray together outside the church in small groups.

Those small groups take Sunday services as a point of departure, an approach Mr. Burck views with a kind



of holy envy. “The Sunday talks are content for the small groups but they’re 30 to 50 minutes,” he explained. “We have Mass.” Since homilies are related to the week’s Scripture reading and cannot always serve as the main starting point for discussion, a small group at a Catholic church requires more planning.

In St. Matthew’s program, parishioners sign up to watch videos that open and close with prayer and include a lecture and a related story. This year’s theme is “The Doctor Is In: Pathways to Healing Mind, Body and Spirit.” After the video, they use an accompanying discussion guide to shape their conversation. The small groups can be a way to practice one other virtue Mr. Burck saw in the evangelical churches: “[Catholics] aren’t used to getting together and talking about our faith.”

Mr. Burck hopes that St. Matthew will not be unusual for long. He expects other parishes to send staff there the way he was sent to Saddleback: “I think this is going to be the model parish in the future; you’re not going to see a church on every block or in every town.”

St. Matthew took another cue from evangelical megachurches when, two years ago, the parish opened a satellite church, which they call their South Campus. The second church is located 10 miles away from the main complex, and it is intended to serve families who might otherwise

struggle to make it to church from their homes. “Who would drive 30 or 45 minutes to Mass with small children?” Monsignor McSweeney asks me.

I ask why they had not just formed a new, autonomous parish at South Campus. What led the diocese and the St. Matthew staff to expand this parish across town? Monsignor McSweeney says, “I think it’s ridiculous to be establishing new parishes when you can do it without duplicating infrastructure, especially with the clergy shortage.”

St. Matthew already runs multiple Masses at 10:45 every Sunday morning at the main campus. One takes place in the main church, which seats 2,000, while the second occurs in the school gym. South Campus allows the parish to squeeze in two more Masses.

South Campus offers only Mass and catechesis. For anything beyond sacramental preparation and the sacraments themselves, the parishioners need to drive over to the main campus. By offering only the essentials at South Campus, the parish staff hopes to keep the Mass-goers at the satellite campus connected to the rest of the community.

Beyond the church itself the sprawling campus of St. Matthew look like any school or office building. Plain doors open to rooms with fluorescent lights. But in the otherwise anodyne hallways are huge posters of illustrations from the Baltimore catechism. They were taken from a do-



Fewer than a quarter of all Catholic churches built since 2001 seat 1,000 people or more. St. Matthew seats 2,000.

ment, spiritual life, and general life outcomes and satisfaction. When the numbers come back, the results are shared alongside the pastoral plan with ministry leaders, followed by breakout sessions to think about what the church could or should do differently.

Brooke Moran finds that the surveys allow the parish to have a more nuanced understanding of the spiritual health of the parishioners. “Some parishes give a state of the church by how many take communion. I look forward to the engagement numbers,” she says.

I ask Don Garbison, who manages the small groups program, which five Gallup questions have done the most to inform his work with the parish. He chooses questions that ask parishioners if they feel they have the opportunity to do what they do best, if their spiritual needs are being met, whether they know what their parish expects of them, whether they feel their opinions count and whether someone in the parish has talked to them about their spiritual practice.

From survey responses, the parish staff gets a better idea of whether a particular program is working. Members of small groups at St. Matthew are much more likely to indicate they feel engaged than those who are in larger groups or do not participate in groups at all, but it can be hard to tell whether the small groups are causing engagement or just attracting the people who are most engaged already.

As a statistician, I know that every survey can limit a story as much as it illuminates it, so I ask leaders of St. Matthew’s ministries what they felt could not be captured by the numbers. Mark Schuler, the chairperson of the parish council, immediately mentions the limitation of in-pew surveys, which cannot capture the people who do not attend Mass regularly. Gene Francisco, who works in the mental health ministry, worries that the marginalized, especially those with mental health issues, may be the least likely to fill out the forms, even if they are present to be surveyed. And Jane Francisco, Gene’s wife and the leader of home ministry, would love to be able to hear more from young people at Mass and from children at St. Matthew’s school (because of concerns about privacy and consent, the survey is given only to those 18 years of age or older).

Once the numbers are in, the parish has a sense of how engaged people feel, but Jeff Wilson, who coordinates Habitat for Humanity work for the parish, wonders, “Can the survey capture ‘I’ve gotten closer to God?’” The survey rests on the premise, Mr. Schuler says, “that a greater degree of engagement results in greater spirituality and life satisfaction.”

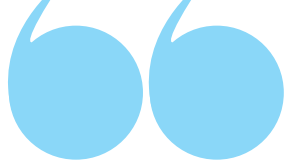
nated catechetical flipbook and repurposed to give life to the corridors.

There is also a crucifix in every room—or nearly every room. Antoinette Usher, the facilities manager, explains that they always have to raid the meeting rooms for Veneration of the Cross services on Good Friday. “We couldn’t do it with only one cross, it would take forever,” she tells me. So priests grab extras and station themselves around the church. It takes a little while for all the borrowed crucifixes to find their way back after the service.

LISTENING TO A LARGE FLOCK

Keeping track of the parishioners is even harder than keeping track of the crucifixes, so the parish has turned to surveys and statistics for new ways of measuring its spiritual health. St. Matthew partners with Gallup and with CARA to conduct two different in-pew surveys. They administer the surveys on an alternating schedule, so they always have fresh data from one of them. The CARA survey allows them to get more granular data and to focus on specifically Catholic questions (e.g., parishioners’ understanding of what the Eucharist is).

Gallup’s Member Engagement Survey is offered in churches of different denominations across the country. The 25-question survey includes questions about engage-



I think this is going to be the model parish in the future; you're not going to see a church on every block or in every town. ●●

If he could add questions, he tells me, he would like more about parish life, and “given the importance of the Eucharist,” more questions about Mass. What he wants most is a way to get more details on the people who do not consider themselves to be engaged.

“Do they not have a feeling of belonging?” he wonders. “Or have some of them been hurt? There are people who fear they sinned too gravely or are facing a teaching they don’t know how to live with. Or someone not sure why they’ve suffered so much.”

Young adults are overrepresented among the less engaged, so St. Matthew has made reaching out to them a priority. Francis Ahn had worked with young adult ministry as a volunteer, but the parish created a paid coordinator’s position for him when they noticed that young adults scored lower on measures of engagement in St. Matthew’s surveys. Mr. Ahn is using his new position to do more for parishioners in their 20s, who are particularly at risk of isolation and alienation. “When they turn up,” he tells me, “they often say ‘I’m away from my family for the first time, I’m all alone.’”

One Mr. Ahn’s new projects to help young adults find a home at St. Matthew is a ministry for new families. I attended the second-ever meeting of this ministry in January after Mass. The attendees include longtime parishioners like Patrick, who has belonged to St. Matthew for 10 years and met his wife through the church’s softball team, and David, who moved here only two years ago.

Mr. Ahn calls the room to order and explains a little about what the group will be doing that day (sharing breakfast and chatting), when he is interrupted by his 3-year-old nephew, who runs up to the front of the room, grabs the mic and yells, “I went potty!” The room politely applauds, and the little boy walks back to his seat, clomping happily in his Batman galoshes.

Mr. Ahn’s nephew is the most excitable (once the an-

nouncements are over, he tries to walk off with the mic stand, which is taller than he is), but there is at least one child at every table, many of them babies alternating between gurgling and trying to steal their parents’ plates and throw them on the floor.

ECONOMIES AND GRACES OF SCALE

These are exactly the kind of people that Beth Haemmerline, an Army veteran, and her husband have come here to meet. She had visited several parishes before joining St. Matthew officially with her husband as part of baptism preparations. She tells me that she was “scared at first” by the size of the church, but she joined the young families group in the hopes of finding friends “who understand canceling social plans when the baby doesn’t sleep.” With St. Matthew’s size, she says, she can trust that she will find someone else in the same position. She just needs the right ministry to draw them together.

Pat Tomlinson, St. Matthew’s director of religious education says that she benefits from the wide range of people who belong to St. Matthew when it comes time to fill out the ranks of catechists. She got involved with the parish when she volunteered with the confirmation program in 1994. Back then, the parish was only half as big, but as a volunteer, she says, “It was so disorganized and it drove me crazy.” She went to the pastor and said, “I don’t want to be paid, but please let me get this thing organized.” She volunteered until 1998, when the pastor asked her to take over as D.R.E. until a new one could be found; the “new one” turned out to be her.

She surprises other D.R.E.’s with how easily she finds teachers. She has found 592 people to teach this year, which makes it possible for her to have two adults per class of about 16 young people. Meanwhile, she says, “My friend at St. Vincent’s has trouble getting 32 catechists—32!” Her only recruiting problem is finding more men to serve as catechists, but they are now up to one-fifth of her teachers after being virtually nonexistent when she started. She is reaching out to the many stay-at-home dads in the community, some of whom have moved to Charlotte because their wives were offered jobs here. Ms. Tomlinson finds a place for these men because there are enough to think of them as a whole group to be served (with a particular opportunity to serve others), not just as a few lonely individuals.

But the ministry that seems to benefit the most from St. Matthew’s size is the bereavement ministry. In such a large community, there is always a family touched by loss.

In a usual week, there are one or two funerals. So once or twice a week, the bereavement ministry steps in. The ministry pairs families with volunteers, who help the family make all the liturgical choices required for the funeral Mass. If the family is having a funeral reception at the church, the bereavement ministry will set up tables, make all the food needed and clean up afterwards, all for free. Afterwards, a volunteer reaches out at least once a month for a year following the death.

It is the bereavement ministry that sticks with me after I've left St. Matthew. It is still hard for me to imagine joining a church that large, a church spread over two campuses, but the singular grace of a megaparish is one I hadn't expected: There are too many people for anyone to carry a cross alone.

The most striking economy of scale in this megaparish is the response to suffering. No matter what the struggle, it can be shared by a sizeable number of people at St. Matthew, just because there are so many people there. Frequent funerals call forth a robust bereavement ministry. Fathers feeling at loose ends at home become catechists and meet other men in the same position. Parishioners struggling

with mental health prompted the creation of a counseling center overseen by Sister Eileen, a Trinitarian nun, that's open to the whole neighborhood, not just parishioners.

The most significant challenges, perhaps, for any parish is figuring out how to care for the people it is meant to serve. At St. Matthew, those challenges grow in scale, alongside the warehouses and ranks of ministers. But at least sometimes the scale becomes a grace as well, as it leads to opportunities to care for people carrying a particular cross in a sustained way. While these responses may leverage the scale of a megaparish, they are built on the same foundation of personal connection and direct ministry that any parish at any size requires.

Leah Libresco, *contributing editor for America*, is the author of *Arriving at Amen: Seven Catholic Prayers That Even I Can Offer*.



Watch a 3-minute video about St. Matthew, including bird's-eye-view drone shots of its massive campus, at <http://www.americamagazine.org/charlotte-megaparish>.

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WHAT DO YOU DO WITH THE

MAD

THAT YOU FEEL?

*Teaching liberal arts
in the Trump era*

By David Dark





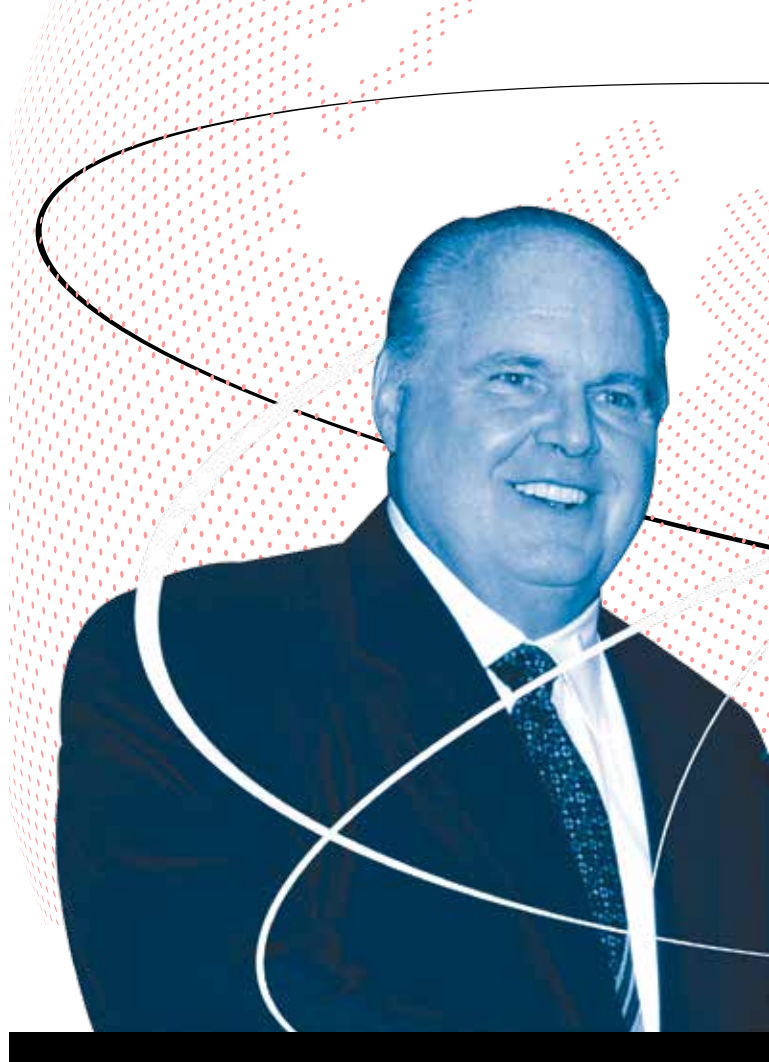
As a 20-year-old with a long commute to college and an AM car radio, I developed an unhealthy attachment to the thinking of Rush Limbaugh. He was funny and confident, and employing his arguments aloud to others made me feel strong. More often than not, I was repeating his talking points without letting myself realize they were his and not mine. But the thought of his voice helped me hold my head a little higher in sociology class. Such were the felt needs of my ego.

I hasten to add that I was not completely hopeless. I also liked Dostoevsky and Public Enemy and R.E.M., and this increased my chances of fitting in somewhat in the company of thoughtful people. Most blessedly, a sufficient number of my teachers and companions refused to hold my Limbaugh-dependent speech against me and, out of kindness, maximized my more redeemable quirks and forgave me my blind spots. I do not know where I would be without such kindness.

These days, I try to pay this kindness forward by impersonating a teacher for a living. I describe my job this way to avoid shame and embarrassment. In what might be the most insanely presumptuous task undertaken by any member of our species, I actually attempt to help people with their own thinking. I sit in rooms with women and men in prisons and college campuses, and, together, we make assertions, put questions to one another, tell stories, read poems aloud and wonder over our words. My job, as I understand it, is to help people pay deep attention to their deepest selves in relationship with other selves. They write sentences. I write sentences next to their sentences. And we get a conversation going somehow.

For some students, I sometimes have the feeling that this might be the first time someone has calmly and respectfully urged them to think twice. I hope it is not the last.

I write these words on the board: “My rights, my wrongs, I’ll write till I’m right with God.” I’m trying to conjure a sacred space. I ask: Who do you imagine said that? Answers vary: Gandhi? Walt Whitman? Martin Luther King Jr.? To my surprise, even those who profess love for Kendrick Lamar are surprised to hear these words are his. I suppose it is something of a sneak affirmation attack. I want them to know that philosophy—meaning the active love of wisdom—is perhaps closer to their own lives and listening habits than they might initially assume. Poetry—that which makes things new—is, too. Maybe they already love and collect it. Their relationship to both, I want to insist, began long before we appeared before one another in



a classroom. Who wants in on the thoughtfulness party? I do. Maybe you do, too.

Critical thinking, we call it. To paraphrase early Wilco, we get to be people who find the time to write our minds the way we want them to read, people who want to be true. Should we accept the mission of becoming philosophers, we will be individuals who want to know what is true more than we want to feel successful or right or powerful. We will desire honesty more than we desire winning. Or as Gift of Gab, one half of the hip-hop duo Blackalicious, instructs us, “domination don’t dignify diction.” But veneration does. Let us venerate one another enough to pursue the possibility of out-loud truthfulness together.

I recall for my students Lupe Fiasco’s comments that if he lies in a song and sells a million records, he has told a million lies. Eyes widen. Are we interested in being that conscious of what we are up to? Is finding out what is true and sharing it that much of a commitment? If it is, we will be collectors of lyrics and sounds, stories and jokes, arguments and analogies that enliven our minds instead of deadening them, that illuminate the facts instead of ob-



scuring them. We will be among those who, throughout history, have hungered and thirsted after the righteousness of plain speak. It is a lifelong learning and yearning best undertaken in the company of others.



YOU SHOULD CHECK THIS OUT

Urging upon people a love of liberating arts (a liberal arts education) is my full-time song and dance, and I really do think of thoughtfulness as a living community in which I myself am initiated anew whenever someone introduces me to another thoughtful person by way of a link, a reading recommendation or a video. “You should check this out” is my love language. We get to set out the table of intellectual hospitality to one another in countless ways all day long. The survival of the species, I know from my own experience, depends on it.

This past year we considered together Octavia Butler’s *Kindred*, a novel in which a black woman, Dana, is periodically pulled back in time to the antebellum South to save the life of her white, slave-owning ancestor, Rufus, at

various stages of his existence. It is a life-threatening rescue operation. Saving him the first time when he is a child about to drown is easy enough, but as he ages her commitment to save him and to even attempt to educate him against all odds becomes increasingly problematic. “Not all children let themselves be molded into what their parents want them to be,” she hopes aloud at one point. But what chance does anyone have of overcoming the murderous ideas upon which they are raised? How do we bring ourselves (or anyone) to a realization that the world that is isn’t the world that has to be? If we get there at all, even for a moment, how do we remain true to that realization once the moment has passed? As Dana observes, “a lifetime of conditioning could be overcome but not easily.”

“I want to know why you wanted us to read this?” one of my incarcerated students once asked. I stumbled around defensively for a few minutes and eventually landed on a rationale. Like any excellent science fiction, *Kindred* can kick-start conversations about what we have normalized and why and what it might mean to try to turn things around. We will always have our own ignorance to contend with, but Butler



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powerfully dramatizes how we cannot even begin to do so without also addressing the infrastructure of bad thinking we are born into and which we often unwittingly fund with our silence. William Blake refers to what we are dealing with as mind-forged manacles. “Don’t believe everything that you breathe,” Beck admonishes. How do we even begin to decolonize our own imaginations?

In an almost comically sad scene, Dana has managed to bring a book on the history of slavery back in time to Rufus as a part of his continuing education. If she can make him see the world to come before it is too late, he might become less likely to torture the people he holds captive and more likely to give his own children their freedom.

“This is the biggest lot of abolitionist trash I ever saw!” he exclaims as he reads about Sojourner Truth.

“No it isn’t,” she says. “That book wasn’t even written until a century after slavery was abolished.”

His reply: “Then why the hell are they still complaining about it?”

When we discuss this exchange in class, the dots appear before us already connected. We have heard it all before. This is a young man for whom lynching and rape are the law and order of the day whining about political correctness. This is a woman trying (and failing) to talk the man out of his own murderous madness. As people will do, Rufus is derisively waving away the living fact of the history he is sitting in and perpetuating. Sound familiar? What is political correctness if not the pressure of realities that call me outside of my own mental comfort zone, my own feverish feed of self-legitimation?

How do we avoid this? By being people of liberating

artfulness. By doing daily battle with our own ignorance and, as often as possible, the ignorance of others. As philosopher-poets, we get to practice deep wit, deep skepticism and deep care when it comes to the words we speak and consider, the stories we take in and tell. We get to watch our language. Are you what you would call progressive? Wonderful. Define what you take to be progress and what you are willing to do to see it through. Conservative? That is quite a task to take on. Name some things you wish to conserve. What do we have in mind when we cling to words like these? What do we hope for? What do we fear?

If we are going to use these labels, we will need to be really clear about what we mean and do not mean. In a community of thoughtfulness, our job is to be as real as we can with the language we have. The awareness campaign we undertake together as writers and readers, listeners and thinkers, has long been underway, beckoning us in for centuries. Books are people talking. What we call literature is nothing more nor less than the greatest hits of the human species. The ancient work of recognition is never done, and anyone with an ear to hear or a mind to pick up what has been laid down is invited to join in. Self-examination, I try to assert, is what makes a beautiful life possible.

HOW SHALL WE VENERATE NOW?

Then came the morning of Nov. 9, the day after election day. Other than reading aloud William Stafford’s “A Ritual To Read To Each Other,” I didn’t know where to begin. For many of my students, it was as if the bottom had dropped

out of their emotional lives. What good is the life of the mind if your heart is telling you that a wave of chaos is coming your way? One student told me she had to listen to podcasts all day to deal with the fact that her parents were celebrating. Another who is serving a life sentence darkly joked that she feels safer in prison.

How shall we venerate now? Can philosophy—that active love of wisdom—still hold? Is it possible to think poetically in the presence of people whose vote differed from you? For almost every student who had communicated support for Donald J. Trump, there were students who let me know they required a day or two to prepare themselves before they would feel comfortable sitting in the same room with them again. And it of course cuts both ways. Down to a person, if they did not look alarmed over the prospect of a Trump presidency, they looked frightened by how frightened their peers were over something that was only beginning to sound like a big deal. Everyone was freaked out.

After I read my Stafford poem and established a few ground rules (No demonizing. No cutting anyone off.), I tried to hang back. We agreed that we did not know for sure what we are in for yet and that we will have to wait to see which of his threats were bluffs, which of his promises were jokes.

As we discussed the amount of trust our system was about to hand over to the president-elect, students began to voice fears for themselves, their families and all the people potentially affected by the new administration. When some tried to dismiss these fears as unfounded, others gently focused the exchange toward a couple of firm resolutions in response: No one gets to explain away another person's experience. And more importantly: We do not get to feel offended by someone else's bodily fear. We get to listen to them.

We demonize people when we feel powerless. We demonize when we do not know what to do with our own despair. But mad, we noted, is ever a form of sad, and our channels for engaging it thoughtfully cannot be controlled by nor are they dependent upon any elected official. We can make our own moments of pause together with others whenever we like. Let's not let the outbursts of one man dictate our emotional lives or the way we address one another. President Trump's chaos need not be our own. We can choose what we take in. And as we have to do with anyone who would try to reduce the whole world to the size of their own fear, we can respond with thoughtfulness at ev-

ery turn. We can make of our own speech, our actions and our thinking a neighborhood expression of care.

IN OUR NEIGHBORHOOD

I borrow the phrase “neighborhood expression of care” from video footage of what I take to be an exemplary instance of soft exorcism, a model for the kind of exchange that, though hardly ever publicized, probably overcomes estrangement and de-escalates tensions somehow somewhere thousands of times a day. It is the testimony of that beautiful adult, Fred Rogers, before the Senate Subcommittee on Communications chaired by Senator John Pastore. He is offering a philosophical argument for the funding of public television and his own labor of love, “Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood,” which Pastore—this is 1969—knows nothing about.

Slowly and steadily, and while maintaining constant eye contact, Mr. Rogers asks permission to go off script. He speaks of trust, his own deep confidence that the senator, like others in the room, shares his concerns for the emotional life of American children. And he wonders if the senator might agree with him as he almost reluctantly characterizes much of the popular programming children are left alone to take in as a form of bombardment. Why not do it differently? From there, he describes his own lifelong effort to speak to human anxiety constructively. For Rogers, it involves puppets, music and listening closely to children—his neighborhood expression of care. His bottom-line? “To make it clear that feelings are mentionable and manageable,” and to cultivate the good feeling of self-control available to each of us whenever we are confronted with perceived conflict. Needless to say, he is practicing his bottom-line right then and there with every grown child present.

And then, as he nears the end of his testimony, he asks if he might recite a song whose title is the question of the hour (maybe every hour): “What do you do with the mad that you feel?” It is as if he has treated everyone present to a psychic blast of blessedness. Rogers pauses to note that the question was purloined from a child struggling with this very issue aloud. We each have the power to stop, stop, stop, Rogers instructs, as he gently strikes the table, when we have planned something, in word or action, that will go badly for ourselves and others. There is something deep within us—an inner resource, our intuition, our core—that can come to our aid when we need it most. Our feelings, we can access the real-

ization at any moment, are mentionable and manageable. We can become what we are supposed to be.

Needless to say, Mr. Rogers got his (and our) funding. The power he channeled, as paradoxical as it sounds, was the strongest voice in the room. He spoke as one with real authority, the authority of a real and loving person, a good neighbor.

I watched this marvel of a video with most of my classes during the presidential election, and we reached a general consensus that “What do you do with the mad that you feel?” is probably the kind of question we would do well to put to anyone seeking public office. We are also right to put the question to ourselves as often as possible. When we avoid this kind of self-examination, we strengthen, each in our own way, the movement of denialism now trying to seize the levers of ultimate power.

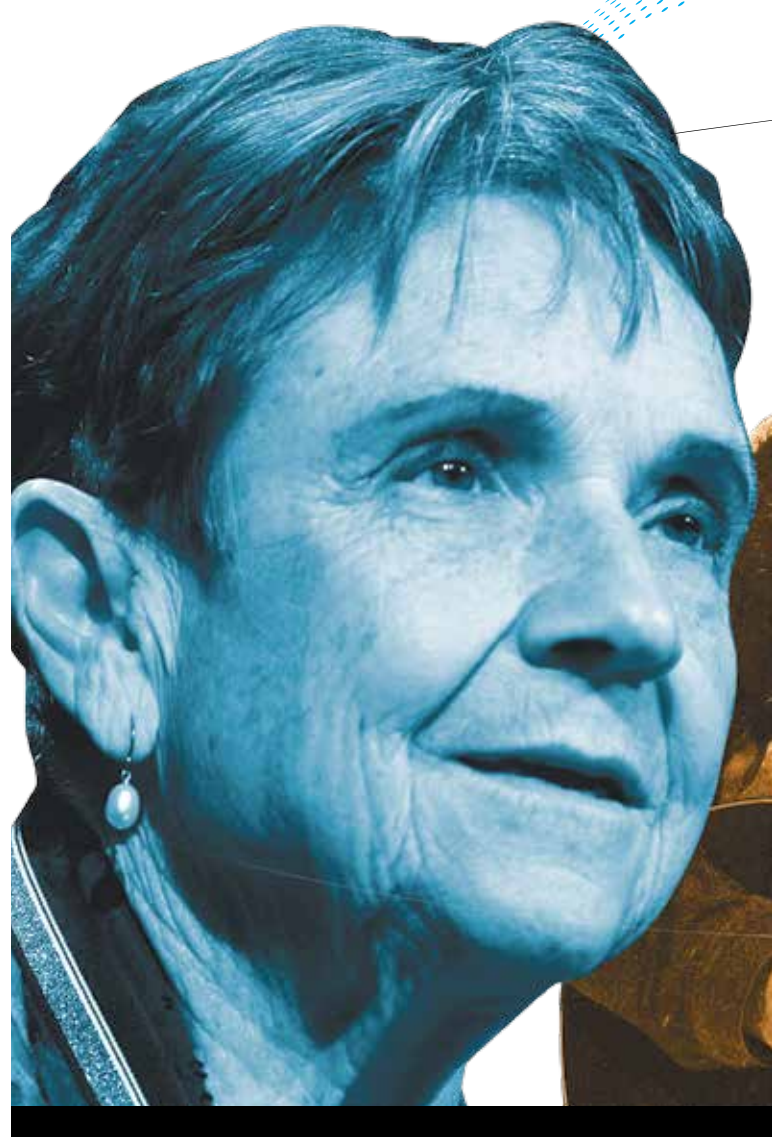
We can differ on our views of what true neighborliness consists of, but we cannot rightly leave the question of neighborliness behind. We are enjoined by the creative labor of those who precede us to find language to match our feelings and fears and to somehow do justice to what is going on. Marvin Gaye’s “What’s Going On” is a neighborhood expression of care. Adrienne Rich’s “Diving Into The Wreck” is a neighborhood expression of care. A sit-in is a neighborhood expression of care. There have been so many. They are all around us even now. We get to make more, together with others, in the face of despair. One breath at a time.

MODELS OF RESISTANCE

As we continue to move forward together as a country, we will need to draw on our inner resources and the neighborly expressions of others constantly. The reigning toxicity of denialism is upon us, but we have the resources to bring renewed thoughtfulness to our every exchange, even when our attempts at thoughtfulness are met with more denial.

As I search my own mind, grasping for models of resistance, I draw strength from a scene recounted in Congressman John Lewis’s March Trilogy when more than 500 activists preparing to march to demonstrate for the right to vote were confronted by Alabama State Troopers on the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma on March 7, 1965. As these heroic Americans prepared themselves for the tear gas and the beatings to come, an exchange occurred.

With state troopers under his command, Major John Cloud gave the order to disperse: “This is an unlawful as-



sembly. Your march is not conducive to the public safety.”

Standing at the forefront of the marchers, the Rev. Hosea Williams wondered aloud if he might be talked out of the state-sanctioned wickedness he was about to order: “May we have a word with the major?”

The response was definitive, “There is no word to be had.” The decree came at them with the force of an alternative fact.

The violence that followed, by being televised, changed history. There was a word to be had, the next day and the day after that and the decades to come down to our day, our radioactive days. The neighborhood expression of care undertaken in Selma, preceded and followed by countless others, is essential still to the meaning of human history, at the center of our cultural canon wherever beloved community is evoked, where there are always words to be had.

No political party and no presidential administration can prevent such feats of thoughtfulness. There is so much precedent for dealing with human madness, so much righ-



teousness to which we might yet be true in new and surprising ways. So many avenues for dramatically conjuring up, for ourselves and our fellow humans, a vision of what is true and lovely and good.

The adult education afforded us by witnesses like Octavia Butler, Fred Rogers and John Lewis is amplified by words of counsel from the poet Mary Oliver. Fittingly, she is describing the emotional centering a child requires, which is, of course, also the centering needed by grown-ups at the mercy of other grown-ups here, there and everywhere: “The child whose gaze is met learns that the world is real, that the child himself is real, and cherished.” If we are to hold ourselves together, we will have a lot of gazing to do and much cherishing of those who have been made to feel—and expect to go on feeling—decidedly uncherished.

May we each meet one another’s gaze—perhaps especially the gazes of those whose words and actions offend or horrify us—as we try to be as real as we can in the days upon us. As was always the case, we are not only responsi-

ble for our own ideas; we are responsible, too, for the ideas we allow others to lift up unchallenged in our presence. We get to engage our collective anxiety constructively, one neighborhood expression of care at a time.

If you aren’t agitated, you aren’t paying attention, but the question remains before us: What do you do with your agitation? It will require strength and courage and determined wit, but there are many words to be had and even more words to be embodied, maybe even for the first time, from here on out.

David Dark teaches at the Tennessee Prison for Women and at Belmont University in Nashville. His work has appeared on MTV News, and he is the author of *Life’s Too Short to Pretend You’re Not Religious*. Twitter: @daviddark.

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A ^{sorta} CATHOLIC'S very CATHOLIC WEDDING

By Tracey Wigfield

I am a Sorta-Catholic. Growing up in New Jersey, I was raised Catholic and went to 12 years of Catholic school. But as a comedy writer living in Los Angeles, being Catholic is not a huge part of my deal. I only go to church on holidays or when the world feels particularly grim. I usually give up something lame for Lent, like “being hard on myself.” I practice what I call “Chipotle Catholicism”: I go down the line picking and choosing the parts of Catholicism that appeal to me (charity, Pope Frank, spooky stories about saints) in order to create a custom-made spiritual burrito.



So two years ago when I got engaged to a fellow Sorta-Catholic, I assumed we would have a Sorta-Catholic wedding. We would get married at a fancy hotel or in one of those woodsy fields where Pinterest people get married. I would walk down the aisle to a cool, meaningful song and be married by our funniest friend. The ceremony probably would not mention Jesus. Maybe God, but God would be called something vague like The Universe, so as not to make anyone uncomfortable.

When I told my mother my vision for my wedding, she got on a plane and flew across the country just to spit in my face.

Where did I come up with this crap? When you get married it is in a church with church music and your aunt reading “Love Is Patient.” A priest does the ceremony, you repeat after him and then once it is done, you have a relaxing, 20-hour break until your reception at the Knights of Columbus.

So where *did* I come up with this crap?

Los Angeles.

Now I know what you’re thinking: L.A. sucks. And it does. When I moved here four years ago, my realtor tried to talk me into renting the guest house of a pornography director who grew marijuana in his garden and had a pet wolf. But outside of the occasional L.A. nonsense, the people I have met out here are truly wonderful: kind and funny and smart. And regardless of background or religious affiliation, they all have fancy, cool weddings.

So if my mother was going to force me to have a Catholic wedding (“Which I am!” she flew across the country again to scream), it was going to be a Sorta-Catholic wedding.

THE VENUE

We started looking for churches in New York City. As anyone who has ever attended a Catholic wedding knows, there is never a seamless transition between the ceremony and reception. Because most churches have 5 p.m. Mass on Saturdays, they require wedding ceremonies to take place at 3 p.m., giving all of your guests a nice three-hour window to spend at a hotel

bar and then arrive at your reception ready to fight and act weird.

When I raised this as a concern to my mother, she rolled her eyes. “They can take a nap or go to Starbucks.”

I called dozens of churches. Would anyone be willing to marry us at a more reasonable time? But every church lady in Manhattan had the same answer: “No.” One Dana Carvey character hung up on me for not knowing that “Mass is at 5:30 but Father has confessional hours prior and *you have some nerve thinking he’s going to move them for your wedding!*” I was beginning to think I was not the first annoying bride who called inquiring if she could bend the rules.

We settled on a church in midtown that my mother had fallen in love with after her visit there. Running out of time, I booked it sight unseen. I flew home a few months later to check it out, and when I got there, I was surprised. I don’t know what I was expecting, but this was a *church*. Not one of those new-age, modern churches with clean lines and lots of light—the kind that could be a church but could also be an Apple store. This was a *church* with stone floors, crazy-high ceilings and stained glass. Granted we were seeing it with all the lights off on a cold February night, but the vibe was less “chill wedding” and more “the Coronation of Pope Celestine V.”

I did not like it. As usual, my mother thought I was just being difficult. “It’s classic and beautiful. Why can’t you like nice things like Kate Middleton?”

And why couldn’t I? Why did any of these little things matter? It was just a wedding. I had always quietly judged women who got super into planning their weddings, women who threw fits because the Chiavari chairs they ordered were supposed to be champagne and not rose gold. I would smugly shake my head, “It ain’t about the Chiavari chairs.” These women clearly had bigger issues going on that they were not interested in addressing. But that was not me. Sure, I was having bi-weekly meltdowns, not just about the Catholic parts of the wedding, but everything: the invitations, my dress, *the Chiavari chairs that I did not order in*



rose gold—why would I ever do that unless I was purposely trying to make the table look like disgusting trash from hell?! No, I was different. I was just trying to plan a nice wedding, and everyone was getting in my way.

THE MUSIC

And that was the kind of chill headspace I was in when Bev the Church Music Director (name changed to protect the innocent) came into my life. My fiancé and I had talked about music that we wanted at the ceremony, in particular a George Harrison song that had special meaning to us. Trying to be helpful, my fiancé offered to email Bev about our selections. His email was met with a list of four classical songs from which we could choose. I nixed all four immediately (boring, boring, spaghetti sauce commercial, Looney Tunes). Surely, if I could explain the situation in person, Bev would understand and let me have my way. “But she said these were the only choices,” mumbled my husband-to-be, his eyes searching for a nearby exit from the room/this impending marriage to a crazy woman. I told him, “Well, we’ll just see about that!”

My mother and I showed up at Bev’s office ready for a fight. Bev, a small, smartly dressed church lady, very politely explained that this was a traditional church and therefore had traditional standards. She handed me the list again. I did not want the list. What was the big deal? I was not asking to walk down the aisle to “Who Let the Dogs Out.” I just wanted a sweet, tonally appropriate pop song. But Bev wasn’t budging. My mother tried to explain that in the parish where I grew up standards were a little more...relaxed. It was not unusual at a special event for the church musicians to “have a little fun,” maybe pull out an Israel Kamakawiwo’ole’s “Somewhere Over the Rainbow.” “Oh, well, not here,” purred Bev. “A man once asked me if he could play a Rolling Stones song at his father’s funeral. I guess it was his father’s favorite song,” she chuckled at the memory. “I told him, absolutely not.”

Excuse me, Bev? Now, I know I am not the one whose paycheck is signed by J. H. Christ and Associates, but this felt like a wild abuse of power. If God flows through everything good and joyful on this earth, God would absolutely be on board with “You Can’t Always Get What You Want.” That song has even got a choir in it! God can’t get enough of choirs! And surely God would not begrudge a grieving man who wanted to honor his dad.

After throwing a pretty embarrassing crying fit in her office, I stormed out, resolute. In the planning of this wed-

ding, there were many battles that I ceded. I couldn't say my own vows. Fine. I couldn't get married in a Pinterest field. Whatever. But The Battle at Bev Run was not a battle I was willing to lose. Church music was the hill on which I had chosen to die.

My campaign raged on over email. Back and forth we went. I would suggest a song, and Bev would refer me back to the list. Little by little I ceded ground. Fine, a pop song was out of the question, but what about a different classical song? Something less stodgy and serious? Maybe, teased Bev. What did I have in mind? I researched classical music, pouring over YouTube clips, consulting musician friends. Finally I found a church-appropriate, classical, Bev-proof piece and sent it to her. She emailed back: "I don't have an arrangement for that. What about a song from the list?" Who taught this woman to negotiate? Sun Tzu? I was getting nowhere.

THE EPIPHANY

A month before the wedding, my fiancé and I attended pre-Cana. Initially, I balked at the idea. I was too busy for this, between my full-time job as a TV writer and my part-time job as a Wedding Tantrum Thrower, plus the shifts I had picked up as a Florist Antagonizer. Being so busy, I did not love the idea of wasting a Saturday in a school gymnasium listening to some Catholic power-couple talk about the rhythm method.

But the thing they don't tell you about pre-Cana is—it's kinda fun. Sure, there was an elderly Korean couple who spoke about sex with the in-your-face confidence of a Cosmo magazine editor, but the rest of the speakers were pretty normal. It was basically just a daylong religion class full of easy quizzes and little art projects. One of the worst parts of being an adult is there are not any "easy classes." Kids in school get to balance math and history with religion and art, but for adults, it's just work and taxes and submitting health claims. Maybe that is why people like taking BuzzFeed quizzes and going to those weird places where you pay to drink wine and make pottery.

We were coming into the home stretch of pre-Cana and, for our last exercise, the priest told us all to stand and face our spouses-to-be, holding hands. The priest would say vows and we would repeat them. "Yikes," I joked, pretending to yank at my collar, "this feels a little too real." My fiancé and I took each other's hands, and as we started repeating the vows, saying them in unison with the 60 other couples in the gymnasium, something weird hap-

pened. I started crying. I had cried a lot during the past few months, but this was not a tantrum over the price of gold embossed napkins. This was an emotional catharsis, the kind of deep tears reserved for a Pixar movie you watch a little drunk on an airplane. My fiancé was concerned. Why was I crying?

Why *was* I crying? Because I realized I was getting married. Feels like I could have used context clues to figure that one out sooner, but somehow it had not occurred to me. Like *really* occurred to me. We were embarking on this giant, life-changing life change. And it was both terrifying and comforting because we were not doing it alone. We were doing it with one another. And with the 60 other couples that had just listened to an ancient Korean man talk about how he likes to have sex on his birthday and with the billions of people who had done this before us and who would do it after we were long gone. It was one of those moments that strikes you and makes you feel both very big and very small at the same time.

Then, the epiphany: "Lady, it wasn't about the Chia-vari chairs."

How could I not see it before? All the fits and the fights and agonizing over stupid details were just a distraction. A distraction from the simple, unavoidable truth: I was getting married. For real and forever.

Rather than confront the enormity of what was happening, I poured my fears into wedding planning. My mind went to Bev. Poor Bev! She was right. Getting married was serious business. It should happen in a serious place, scored by a serious song written a long-ass time ago.

And you can't sorta do it. It's like being Catholic. Or having a kid or climbing Mount Everest or doing anything worth doing. You can't sorta get married.

After my realization at pre-Cana, everything felt a little lighter. Things went wrong on our wedding day, as they always do. It rained. The church accidentally mixed up the reading we chose so my brother-in-law read "Love Is Patient" after all. People got drunk and weird. But overall, the day was perfect. Special and joyful, with a ceremony that would have made Pope Celestine V himself say, "Damn, this is, like, super Catholic."

Tracey Wigfield, a graduate of Boston College, is an Emmy-Award winning comedy writer. She has written for "30 Rock" and "The Mindy Project" and is the creator and executive producer of the new NBC sitcom "Great News," which premieres on April 25.



A rally in support of immigrants in Massapequa Park, N.Y., on Feb. 24.

How do I respond when ICE comes for my flock?

By Raymond P. Roden

And so it begins. News arrives by way of our people, young and old, of roustings by the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency, aptly known as ICE. As the pastor of Our Lady of Sorrows Church in Corona, N.Y., I hear the stories. Our parochial vicars, lay leaders and permanent deacons hear them as well.

How does a pastor respond to second graders terrified because they believe their parents might not be there when they come home from school? Or to the elderly lady who bursts into tears in the middle of Mass because “they came into my house and took my husband”? Or to the Dominican-American citizen, born in Queens, the daughter of citizens born here as well, stopped in her car on the

streets of Manhattan. When documents were demanded—driver’s license, birth certificate and passport—she easily produced the license. But who carries around a birth certificate and passport? She was given a summons to appear in court to prove that she is a citizen of her, of our, country.

Then there was the threat of violence—“bloodshed” was the word they used—against a neighboring pastor, should the flag of Mexico ever appear in his church again, as it did for his parish’s Guadalupe celebration last December. “Because this is what our president wants,” he was told. My brother priest did what I would have done. He called the cops.

How to respond, indeed. The Saturday evening and

CNS photo/Gregory A. Sherritz

Sunday following the release of the president's new deportation guidelines in late February, I preached at all 12 of our Masses at Our Lady of Sorrows because the moment had arrived, the first of many, I am sure, in the current crisis. The moment to console, to accompany, to be in solidarity with, to be church together. It wasn't so bad, really, except that I had to preach the last three homilies seated because of the sharp pain that was like a knife in my lower back. No, it was very good. Our Lady of Sorrows is Our Lady of Consolation.

The decisions and actions of our government with regard to immigrants and refugees since Jan. 20 have been despicable, and support among Catholics for those decisions embarrassing. How to respond when the Gospel is mocked, or worse, ignored? Turning to saints and heroes has always been our way in the Catholic thing, especially in tough times. Who do I look to today?

Pope Pius XI (1922-39), confronted by thug politicians in Europe, Mexico and elsewhere, did not remain silent. In 1925 he established the liturgical feast of Christ the King to call a world awash in "executive orders" back to reality. Twelve years later, his encyclical letter "With Burning Concern," raised defiance and resistance to new heights in the face of the grave sins of nationalism and religious persecution.

In that time of great resistance, Blessed Clemens von Galen, the "Lion of Münster," was forbidden to distribute his homilies to the public. So he called on friends in the British Air Force, who then dropped thousands of copies out of airplanes all over Germany. Blessed Rupert Mayer, S.J., of Munich was arrested repeatedly right out of the pulpit at Mass for his verbal broadsides against the criminal policies of his government. Each time he was ordered to cease and desist, he did it again.

Recently I visited one of our parishioners in jail, where he was brought by ICE. Having gotten all the necessary permissions and clearances, I was told that there was no record of my scheduled appointment. I insisted that the officer look harder, hinting that I might call his supervisor to help. Had they not allowed the visit, I would have politely refused to leave, even if that meant getting arrested. Blessed Miguel Pro, martyred in Mexico in 1927, came to mind with a chuckle. He used to say: "I hope they lock me up. I could use the rest!"

Suddenly the visitor's permit was found, and I was able to have a half-hour conversation with the man I came to see with no further fuss, other than having to speak on a tele-

phone with security glass between us. The day before Father Pro's funeral, by the way, the government announced that the public was absolutely forbidden to attend under penalty of this or that. Thirty thousand people showed up for the banned Mass at Mexico City's Holy Family Church, overflowing into the streets.

And so it begins. Where it will end I have no idea, but I don't have a very good feeling about the outcome of the present crisis. I do know that we will continue to pray and walk together in solidarity and nonviolent resistance. No one can take our joy from us. After all, our best documents are our baptismal certificates.

The Rev. Raymond P. Roden, a priest of the Diocese of Brooklyn since 1981, is pastor of Our Lady of Sorrows Parish in Queens, N.Y.

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The Supreme Court, the Senate and the Filibuster

In order to confirm Justice Neil M. Gorsuch, Republican senators invoked the so-called nuclear option, eliminating the filibuster for Supreme Court nominations. While this development is new, contention over both the court and the filibuster has a long history. In 1987, as a fight built over the nomination of Judge Robert H. Bork, America's editors pointed out that the pretense that the argument was about his qualifications rather than politics and ideology (and especially abortion) could not and should not be maintained. Thirty years earlier, Senator Paul H. Douglas of Illinois had argued in America's pages for stopping the filibuster to allow civil rights legislation to proceed. The anti-filibuster push was unsuccessful, and Senator Strom Thurmond went on to set the record for the longest filibuster, speaking for more than 24 hours in opposition to the Civil Rights Act of 1957. The bill eventually passed.

“Historical” arguments, supposedly based on the intentions of the Constitution’s framers, are already being made in the Senate to prove that no one should impose an ideological test on the Bork nomination. Even granted the Judge’s impeccable legal and academic qualifications for the Supreme Court, it would be silly to maintain that politics or ideology should have nothing to do with whether his nomination is easily confirmed, or confirmed at all. The Senate’s consent cannot be forced by a show of academic probity or impressive legal credentials, even if, all other things being equal, such qualifications should count the most. Inevitably, there will be a political struggle, so let there be a minimum of crocodile tears on that score. Those now friendly to the Bork nomination might well be questioning the nomination of some other candidate hereafter, and legitimately so....

There can be little doubt that Mr. Bork’s reservations about *Roe v. Wade*, the 1973 Supreme Court decision that removed the regulation of abortion from the states and legalized it nationwide, will be a decisive factor in determining the outcome of the confirmation debate.... It is the implacable opposition of pro-abortion lobbyists that has given this debate its fierceness so far and promises to be its most characteristic feature.... Mr. Bork is not the only one who doubts the wisdom of *Roe v. Wade*. If Mr. Bork’s opinion of *Roe v. Wade* is to be the litmus test of his suitability, then he passes.

Editorial, Sept. 5, 1987

When the Senate of the 85th Congress convenes this week, a number of us, Democrats and Republicans, will move to change Rule 22—the filibuster rule in the Senate.

Not since the Reconstruction Era at the end of the Civil War has civil-rights legislation been passed into law. Civil-rights bills in the Senate have been talked to death eight times since 1938.

Numerous other civil-rights bills have died because of the threat of a filibuster....

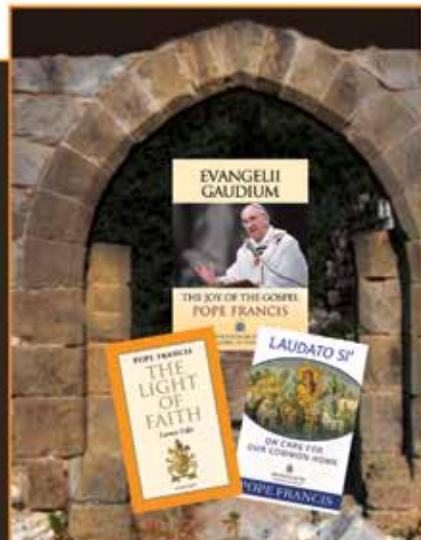
The filibuster, or the threat of a filibuster, has killed not only civil-rights legislation but other important bills as well. When progressive measures have not been killed they have, more often than not, been watered down to meet the demands of their opponents because of this Sword of Damocles which hangs over the Senate....

Unless this is done, the pledges made by both Republican and Democratic parties on civil rights are meaningless and hollow. What is at stake is the dignity of the Senate and its ability to function as a democratic legislative body. Only if this effort is bipartisan can it be successful. Equally so, if it is bipartisan, it will be successful. A small minority must not be allowed to prevent, forever, even the consideration of what the overwhelming majority of the Senate and the country desires.

Senator Paul H. Douglas, Jan. 5, 1957



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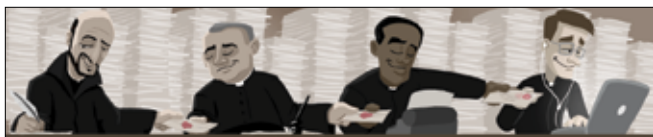
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Finding the Catholic Voices In Social Justice Poetry

By Lisa Ampleman

As we mark the first anniversary of the death of Daniel Berrigan, S.J., on April 30, we seem to be in a season of protests: voters showing up in droves to town halls held by their congressional representatives, spontaneous demonstrations at airports against President Donald J. Trump’s travel bans, and

both immigrants and women asserting their importance by striking or staying home from work. It is easy to imagine Father Berrigan among the protesters, linking arms in the street.

The state of social justice poetry is also strong. Some of today’s most lauded young poets have taken up the

mantle once worn by activist poets like Berrigan, Adrienne Rich and Amiri Baraka.

Berrigan worked passionately for peace and antinuclear causes from the Vietnam era onward, even facing arrest in 2003 at age 81 for trespassing during a demonstration at an armed

Like the late Father Daniel Berrigan, many poets today ask:
How do we live and act in solidarity with our neighbor?

forces recruiting station in Times Square in New York. His poetry, most often in free verse, reflected his Catholic faith, while it also questioned injustices and urged action to end them.

Poets still write work that addresses tough questions: How do we live and act in solidarity with our neighbors, welcoming the stranger? How should the government and larger society treat individuals, especially those who live in poverty or in any way are vulnerable? And how can we reform flawed institutions?

One organization, called Split This Rock, hosts workshops and a biennial festival of “socially engaged poets,” as well as an online database of poems. Its mission is to encourage “poets to a greater role in public life,” and plenty have answered its call.

Some socially concerned poems have gone viral through social media, like Ross Gay’s “A Small Needful Fact.” In 15 compact lines, Gay forms a poignant image of Eric Garner, a man who died after being placed in a chokehold by New York police:

*Is that Eric Garner worked
for some time for the Parks
and Rec.
Horticultural Department,
which means,
perhaps, that with his very
large hands,
perhaps, in all likelihood,
he put gently into the earth
some plants which, most likely,
some of them, in all likelihood,
continue to grow, continue*

*to do what such plants do, like
house
and feed small and necessary
creatures,
like being pleasant to touch
and smell,
like converting sunlight
into food, like making it easier
for us to breathe.*

The single sentence here moves slowly, interrupted by clauses like “perhaps” and “in all likelihood.” We know Garner’s story, but Gay tells us something new: that Garner worked for a horticultural department. Gay heightens the sense of tragedy in the final image of plants that make it “easier/ for us to breathe,” which calls to mind Garner’s plea, captured on video: “I can’t breathe.” The poem does not preach an explicit call to action but instead encourages readers to see Garner as a human being worthy of breath.

According to a 2014 study, reading poetry activates parts of the brain related to memory and introspection, stirring the emotions much the way music does. Poems like Gay’s—or other “poetry of witness,” as it is sometimes called—can remind readers of inequities and prejudices and inspire them to work for justice.

At first glance, the Catholic tradition of social justice activism is not as evident in contemporary poetry as it was in Berrigan’s time. The concerns of these poets often overlap with Catholic social teaching, but not always. In this environment, few poets call themselves “Catholic poets,” even

if they otherwise identify as Catholic.

Natalie Diaz might be a good model for an alternative “Catholic poet” fitting this age. The author of a much-praised book of poetry, *When My Brother Was an Aztec*, Diaz has won numerous awards. As a member of the Gila River Indian community, she works to preserve the Mojave language and has spoken about a need for environmental justice for the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation and Colorado River communities. In a 2015 poem, she writes, “My river was once unseparated. Was Colorado. Red-/fast flood. Able to take// anything it could wet—in a wild rush—// all the way to Mexico.// Now it is shattered by fifteen dams/ over one-thousand four-hundred and fifty miles,// pipes and pumps filling/ swimming pools and sprinklers// in Los Angeles and Las Vegas.”

Her poems also describe going to Mass and use images of rosary beads, statues of the Virgin Mary and holy water. In “Reservation Mary,” Diaz creates a Native American character, Mary Lambert, whose life story echoes the Virgin: pregnant and unwed, later wanting water to be turned into “E & J Ripple” wine. Some of Diaz’s most powerful poems describe a fraught relationship with a drug-addicted brother. “My parents crossed fingers// so he’d never come back, lit *novena* candles/ so he would,” she writes in her book’s title poem.

Diaz’s poetry does not identify itself by devotional or dogmatic statements (in fact, some Catholics might object to subject matter like her por-

trayal of her female lover's body in religious terms). Instead, she shows the sacramentality of everyday life and the challenges—including poverty and drug addiction—sometimes faced by the marginalized. Her work typifies a vibrant, varied literary culture interested in the ways in which differences matter and even enrich our experience.

In an interview in 2012, Diaz described her experience growing up with both Native American and Spanish Catholic traditions: “In my house, there is enough room for all of those cultures, for all of our religious beliefs, for all of our different kinds of expressions of faith, and so for me that's exactly the way I write. I can mix images from my reservation with images from my Catholic faith, with words in Spanish, with words in my Mojave language and other influences.”

She also warns, in a recent interview with Kenyon Review, that she is “skeptical of what witness has become in poetry,” in part because she is wary of empathy, which she calls “selfish.” “We can't have empathy for the people

we drop bombs on because we aren't afraid bombs will be dropped on us,” she says.

In other words, social justice poetry can fail if people who are privileged and safe feel that just because they have read a poem about war, they have experienced the feelings of those who are terrorized by war. Such empathy is voyeuristic and empty if readers fail to take any further action.

Moving beyond insincere empathy is on the mind of another poet who serves as a model for the new Catholic poet, Philip Metres, the first recipient of the George W. Hunt, S.J. Prize for Excellence in Journalism, Arts & Letters, an annual award given by America Media to writers under 50 who “employ a Catholic imagination in their writing.” Metres's influential book of poetry, *Sand Opera* (2015), arose out of a Lenten devotion reading the stories of those who were imprisoned in the notorious Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq. As he told Vatican Radio, “I thought of it as a Lenten project because...the torture itself echoes for me the greater story of Lent and Easter season, the great pains that Jesus endured and his death.”

In the final poem of *Sand Opera*, “Compline,” Metres strings together images from the 2003 Iraq war as the speaker prays that “Every improvised explosive, Talon & Hornet, Molotov / & rubber-coated bullet, every unexploded cluster bomblet, // Every Kevlar & suicide vest & unpiloted drone raining fire / On wedding parties will be burned as fuel in the dark season.”

The poem concludes: “My God, my God, open the spine binding our sight.” This is the instinct of today's socially concerned poems: to open the

sight of their readers, to serve as witness to suffering and injustice.

We can include here other Christian poets who have expressed God's call to justice in their poetry. Maria Melendez Kelson, for example, a Quaker poet and author of two books, has been featured at the Split This Rock festival. Her sonnet “Love Song for a War God” shows the complicated nature of poetry responding to issues of injustice or war: “We have learned that all men's tears / are not created equal,” the poem says. “We were wrong / to offer flames to quell your fires. Still, / I must dismember you inside this song.” She speaks directly to the god of war, acknowledging that violent conflict has disproportionate effects and attempting to “dismember” war within the act of writing the poem. However, the speaker is complicit in a way, as *part* of the “we” who waged war.

Many of Kelson's poems fall within the genre known as ecopoetics (poetry concerned with environmental issues) and illustrate elements of Latino Catholic culture. In “Oda a Doña Lancha,” she describes a woman taking a statue of John the Baptist to a creek where she “baptizes The Baptizer, bathes / her San Juanito in that little creek to increase / the likelihood of downpours / in these months of drought.” Water is also a concern in “Llorona's Guide to Baptism,” from her first book: “As for the water: any creek / with fish storing enough mercury / to damage a human fetus / will do.” In these poems, Kelson points out that the instrument most associated with baptism, water, has been damaged by industrial runoff or dried up in particular regions because of climate change.



The poet
Natalie Diaz

Photo: Michelle Sweatt Photography

Just as Catholic social teaching calls us to cooperate with believers of different faiths, so too could we consider poets like Kelson as speaking to Catholics about issues we share in common. In one of her most powerful poems, "Good Friday," she shows us what it is to be human, created in original sin and freed only by someone else's suffering: "Jesus I want my sins back," the speaker says. "If you take away my inordinate cravings,/ what the hell's left?...?/ I want them all back if they're/ so To Die For. Else shred my palms,/ wash my face with spit, let the whip/ unlace my flesh and free the naked blood,/ let me be tumbled to immortality...." It is impossible to separate ourselves from our sins unless we acknowledge how we share in the sufferings of Christ.

In 2012, fewer than 7 percent of adults reported reading poetry during the previous year. However, a vibrant literary subculture exists for those interested in social justice issues and hungry to feel a renewed sense of activism. This socially conscious poetry may be preaching to the choir in many cases, but perhaps this is what it should do. The choir needs a fire lit under it too.

Lisa Ampleman, *the managing editor of The Cincinnati Review, is the author of a collection of poems, Full Cry, and a chapbook, I've Been Collecting This to Tell You. Her poems and prose have appeared in the journals Poetry, Image and Notre Dame Review.*

Daniel Berrigan prays the rosary at a supermarket: in July

A meditation upon exiting a grocery store Fr. Berrigan refused to enter, and finding him sitting on the hood of the car, praying the rosary.

By Luke

are not the wanderings
 in and out of shadows
 the sad facts of hunger
 hatred and neglect

the old women
 who have forgotten their children's
 freshening

the plucked and teased
 ambiguities on the street

sorrowful
 mysteries of our day

that you
 choose to sit among them and
 reflect wonder at their coming
 will for the space you ask

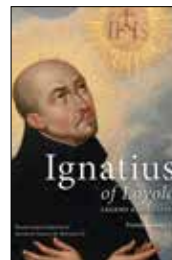
be
 radiated into glory

the joy
 we have is that you name us
 angels by choosing desert
 over death

think what you will
 your fingers count off decades
 from our flight

the banquet
 we buy is your attention to
 the ritual of new bread and
 new meat and wine

Joseph A. Brown, S.J., publishing as "Luke," was awarded *America's Foley Poetry Prize* in 1969. His *The Sun Whispers, Wait: New and Collected Poems* (Brown Turtle Press) was published in 2009.



**Ignatius of Loyola
Legend and Reality**
By Pierre Emonet, S.J.
Trans. by Jerry Ryan.
Edited by Thomas M.
McCoog, S.J.
Saint Joseph's University
Press. 153p \$40



**The Jesuits
and the Popes**
A Historical Sketch of
Their Relationship
By John W. O'Malley, S.J.
Saint Joseph's University
Press. 149p \$40

Ignatius Loyola, the Jesuits and the Pope By Robert Emmett Curran

The biography of Ignatius Loyola by Pierre Emonet, S.J., and the overview of Jesuit-papal relations by John W. O'Malley, S.J., are sterling examples of how richly informative well-crafted, brief volumes can be.

Emonet's text aims to reveal the Ignatius whom bias, agendas and ideology have too often distorted and misrepresented. Emonet deftly etches Loyola's confoundingly complex character while capturing the marrow of Ignatius' transformation from worldly minded glory-seeker to ascetic discoverer of an innovative spirituality and founder of arguably the most influential religious order within Christianity.

Ignatius grew up a beneficiary of feudal networks of patronage and indulger of the most traditional military and courtly aspirations. That pathway to fame and riches terminated abruptly on Pentecost Monday, May 20, 1521, when, defending the fortress at Pam-

plona, he was struck by a French cannon ball. Well known is the story of Ignatius's forced reading of two spiritual classics while he was in recovery. For a time, godly and saintly feats vied with his traditional chivalric ones. Gradually they became his first experience of the discernment of spirits; later at Manresa the latter served as catalyst for the Spiritual Exercises.

The search for God's will, facilitated by mystical visions, brought Ignatius to the Holy Land to meditate on Christ in his footsteps. Gradually came the notion of the man for others as the best way to serve him. In Spain and France for the studies essential to the realization of his new vision, Ignatius, through evangelizing, attracted a community of like-minded companions. In August of 1534 they took vows of poverty and chastity, with the intent of converting Muslims in the Holy Land.

When wars in the region foreclosed that goal, Ignatius and the

others headed to Rome to determine God's will. Months of deliberation produced the decision to form a religious order, a very untraditional one with no central monastery, no distinctive habit, no mandated choir for the recitation of the office and no communal penances—all this to preserve what was essential to the members' ministry: mobility and availability.

Securing papal sanction proved difficult. Ignatius' persistence and the pressure of powerful friends finally brought Pope Paul III's formal approval in late September 1540. His last 18 years were spent in Rome communicating with Jesuits on mission on four continents, from Europe to Asia to the Americas, while he worked at refining the Constitutions of the Society of Jesus. He died in 1556 with them yet unfinished, befitting a text meant to be a living document, ever being adjusted according to the changing experience of the group.

John W. O'Malley, S.J., the dean of Jesuit historical studies, has provided a tour-de-force treatment of the relationship between the Jesuits and the popes, which had far-reaching consequences for the church over the centuries.

Given the extraordinary international composition of its founding group, the Jesuit order developed an unprecedented cosmopolitan concept of mission. With the world itself as their apostolic field, the Jesuits looked to the authority best situated to choose their missions. So was born a vow distinct to this new order: one of obedience to the pope. That special vow proved significant mainly for its symbolic value.

Through most of the 17th century, controversial issues at times caused popes to interfere in the governance of the Society, but with no permanent damage. The Chinese rites controversy initiated an anti-Jesuit campaign that reached its full force under the devious leadership of the Portuguese prime minister, the Marquis de Pombal, who systematically demonized the Jesuits in his country to rationalize their expulsion in 1759. Pombal's success energized the Society's enemies in France to bring about its banishment there. Spain fell into the suppression line in 1767, with the expulsion of all Jesuits from its far-flung empire.

Finally there came the demand from the Bourbon governments that the pope make the suppression of the Society universal. Pope Clement XIII refused, only to die of a heart attack a few days later, in February 1769. In the ensuing conclave, Bourbon agents brazenly lobbied the supposedly isolated cardinals. After 185 voting sessions the Bourbons finally got their man, the compliant Giovanni Vincenzo Gangan-

elli. The increasingly paranoid pope delayed more than three years but finally was pressured into signing the brief of suppression. The Jesuits, who in 1750 boasted a membership of 22,500, with over 700 educational institutions, had disappeared canonically.

But not in fact. Jesuits survived in Prussia and Russia, thanks to rulers who prized their schools, and to Clement XIV's successor, Pius VI, who in 1775 signaled the Jesuits in Russia that their survival did not displease him. A novitiate founded by Catherine the Great ensured the future of this remnant of the Society. Then in 1801 came formal papal recognition of the Society with Pius VII's brief, "Catholicae Fidei." And a full restoration arrived in 1814 with Napoleon's defeat.

The restored Society enjoyed a closer relationship with the papacy over the ensuing two centuries than it had ever known before the Suppression. The incorporation of so many Jesuits into the enlarged and centralized papal curia strengthened the bonds. As the pope became the epitome of stability and the old order, the Jesuits took their stand squarely with the pope.

By the time Gregory XVI succeeded Leo XII in 1829, the Jesuit superior general, Jan Roothaan, was meeting weekly with the pontiff. Individual Jesuits were significantly involved in the promulgation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception and in the decrees of the First Vatican Council. In the 20th century the Pontifical Biblical Institute and the Vatican Radio were both given to the management of the Jesuits. Symbolic of this unprecedented collaboration was the location of the new Jesuit curia in the 1930s, virtually cheek-by-jowl with St. Peter's Square.

Jesuits played key roles in the development of the central documents that the Second Vatican Council produced. The 31st General Congregation (1965-66) deliberated over the implications of the council for the life and work of the Society and chose a new superior general, Pedro Arrupe. Reactionary elements within the church did not take happily to the social justice direction that the congregation had set for the Society. Some in the Vatican smelled Marxism.

In 1981 Pedro Arrupe suffered a seriously impairing stroke. Father Arrupe designated a vicar general to govern the Society until a general congregation could be called to elect an official successor. For the first time in the restored Society, the pope intervened. There would be no general congregation. He was appointing his own delegate, a Jesuit, to provide interim leadership for the Society. Some saw this as the beginning of another suppression. Many more saw it as papal usurpation and the end of the Society's traditional limited autonomy. It proved not to be any of that. In 1983 the pope not only permitted the 33rd General Congregation to meet but made a personal appearance.

Relations resumed their cordial character over the next three decades. Then the great papal stunner of 2013: the election of Jorge Mario Bergoglio as Francis I. For the first time in the church's long history, a Jesuit had become pope. Even with a Jesuit in Peter's chair, the Jesuits and the pope remain a very distinctive duality.

Robert Emmett Curran is a professor emeritus of history at Georgetown University.

Pilate as an agent of salvation

Aldo Schiavone is an Italian classical historian who has occasionally ventured into more popular works, like his recent study of Spartacus. Here he turns to Pontius Pilate, the Roman procurator of Judea who condemned Jesus to death. Other than the witness of the Gospels, relatively little is known about Pilate apart from brief mentions by Josephus, Philo, Tacitus and a recently discovered epigraph in Caesarea.

One of the contributions of this book is that it situates Pilate in the social political and cultural milieu of the Roman Empire in the Middle East, especially in the conflicted atmosphere of Judea and Jerusalem at the time of Christ. The reader comes close to de-

veloping a sympathy for Pilate in dealing with the Jewish population and its leaders, so at odds were the practices of Roman rule with the idiosyncratic religious and political convictions of the Jews. In clarifying this relationship, Schiavone is able to argue which aspects of the Gospel accounts relating to Pilate's case are more or less credible. Among the less likely aspects are any abdication by Pilate of his authority and responsibility for the condemnation of Jesus to a Jewish crowd, which Schiavone argues simply was not present. This was a matter between Pilate and a small group of Jewish religious leaders, and so the crowds calling for Barabbas or saying "His blood be upon us!" simply did not happen.

It is Schiavone's conviction that

Pilate was always in control that leads him to the most interesting argument in the book, which he makes through a reconstruction of what he believes was the likely dialogue between Pilate and Jesus. While Pilate might not have believed in Jesus' mission, he came to accept that he had one, which he understood could be accomplished only through Jesus' sacrificial death. Pilate's condemnation of Jesus, even though he did not think him guilty of any offense, represents, therefore, his acceptance of Jesus' understanding of God's will for him and makes Pilate a self-aware participant in the mystery of salvation.

Jeffrey von Arx, S.J., is president emeritus of Fairfield University.

More hyperbole for the culture wars

Out of the Ashes, by Anthony Esolen, is a self-described "Battle Plan for Winning the Culture War." Aimed at true believers, it leaves no room for soft apologies or compromise with the enemy. Catastrophic hyperbole is a favorite rhetorical technique—for example, "There are only two things wrong with our schools: everything that our children don't learn there, and everything they do."

If the book's intended goal is to be simply a "battle plan," it could be described as a success. It provides a helpful map to appreciate the connections between the various critical components of this brand of a conservative worldview: family, gender, work

schedules; education, leisure and civil society; and convictions about the ideal size and role of government. Passages from the classics and other literature also provide much food for thought.

But those who are looking for a serious effort to understand, meet or engage center-left or even center-right perspectives will be disappointed.

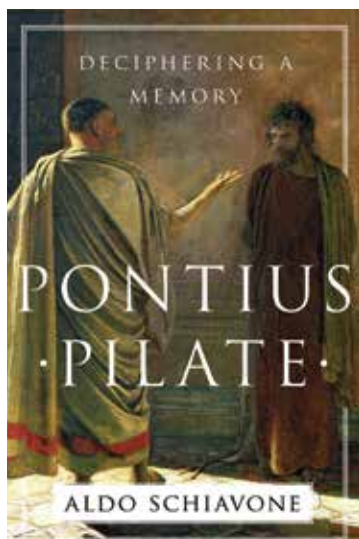
A particularly troubling part of the book is the argument that the encroachment of women into work and public life is to be blamed for a host of evils, including blocking productive civil public discourse. In Congress, the "creative enmity" of days gone by has disappeared because "in the presence of woman [sic], men become more intransigent, not less." Instead, womanly sympathy "is essentially personal and intimate. It flourishes

best at the hearth, the bedside, the table. It is passionate self-giving that makes the home."

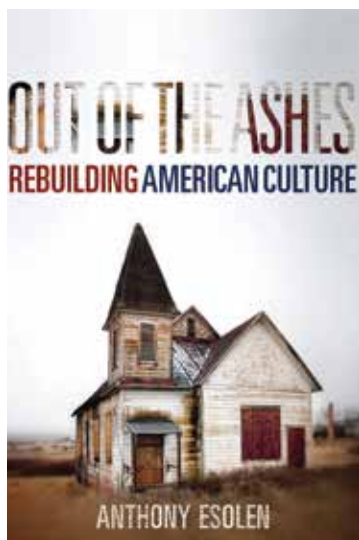
While the book seems to promise a plan for cultural renewal, it gives little attention to the most challenging steps—for example, how to address the systemic poverty that leads many people to impossibly difficult economic choices and inhumane work schedules.

Because of these serious flaws, the book is a missed opportunity to engage people who may share some of Dr. Esolen's questions and concerns, even if they do not agree with other aspects of his vision.

Amy Uelmen is a lecturer at the Georgetown University School of Law.



Pontius Pilate
 Deciphering a Memory
 By Aldo Schiavone
 W. W. Norton. 226p \$25



Out of the Ashes
 Rebuilding American Culture
 By Anthony Esolen
 Regnery Publishing. 256p \$18

A theologian of unmatched influence

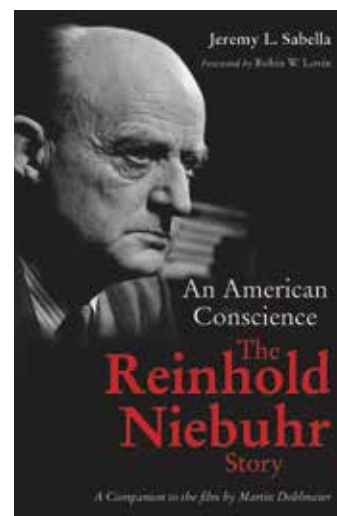
“Reinie’s gone crazy!” “Reinie” here was Reinhold Niebuhr, who is almost certain to retain his status as the foremost Protestant theologian in mid-20th-century America. Young Langdon Gilkey, a leader in the next generation, remembers hearing this “crazy!” shout by his father, a liberal dean of Rockefeller Chapel at the University of Chicago. He was not the last to think of Niebuhr as “crazy,” unaccustomed as the senior Gilkey and his cohort were to the language of Christian realism about human nature, ethical paradoxes and signs of readiness for personal change if conscience called.

Most of us would care little about mere crazies, but Niebuhr was sane, learned and steady as a “public theologian” in his writings, when teaching in New York, in pulpits, on the lecture circuit or as a high-level adviser on domestic and international affairs. He fought corruption and injustice in the labor-management worlds, and he influenced policy during the Depression, in World War II and in the emergent international order. But some contributors to this book, quoted from their interviews with veteran TV producer Martin Doblmeier, rightfully complain of some exceptions, such as Niebuhr’s relative distance from the front lines on racial and gender issues.

Shaped by Reformed Protestantism, serious encounters with the Gos-

pels, and conversation with leaders of many faiths or no faiths, Niebuhr developed a theology that some saw as too pessimistic to be an attractive response to the conflicts of his times, but he still drew crowds and had unmatched influence. As for his “American conscience”: not until page 137 in this short book does the author, Jeremy Sabella, get to discussing “The Voice of Conscience” systematically. But his tracing of Niebuhr’s life reveals a conscience that was alert, critically listened to and open to hope of the sort that the present generation, in the midst of our chaos, should welcome.

Martin E. Marty is a distinguished professor of the history of modern Christianity at the University of Chicago.



An American Conscience
 The Reinhold Niebuhr Story
 By Jeremy L. Sabella
 Erdmans. 160p \$19.99

"The Case for Christ," starring Mike Vogel, asserts that only one who ignores the evidence could fail to see that Jesus is Lord.



The case for (and problem with) Christian movies

We might feel we know the characters of Christian movies from the moment we sit down to watch them. Titles like *"Heaven is for Real,"* *"God's Not Dead"* (1 and 2) and the newly released *"The Case for Christ"* offer a sense of what is in store. Somber Movie-Trailer Voice: "In a world...that is progressively non-religious, and violently atheistic...one Christian will learn to profess his belief, facing the challenge to prove his faith in Jesus Christ."

Based on the best-selling autobiography of the same name, *"The Case for Christ"* is the story of a Chicago Tribune editor (and atheist) named Lee Strobel, who undertakes the task of debunking the "myth" of Christianity after his wife's unexpected conversion. Ostensibly, Lee's intent is to save his wife from getting sucked into what he fears may be a cult. But as the story unfolds, Strobel's selfishness, intellectual pride and inability to address a deep-seated sense of woundedness stemming from his relationship with

his father reveal the true motivations behind his refusal to believe in God.

"The Case for Christ" asserts that only one who chooses to ignore the evidence could fail to see that Jesus is Lord. This conclusion, an argument for the certainty of faith, reveals a fairly constant trend in recent Christian films. These movies provide clear accounts of why we ought to have faith in Jesus Christ. And they continue to be well received because many Christians perceive a threat: namely, that other voices in contemporary culture will overwhelm traditional expressions of Christian belief.

Seen in the right light, Christian films are like moving stained-glass windows. They reveal images of discipleship that depict faith within this present cultural reality but also represent hope in an unseen future. The charm is in the simplification of story that valorizes attractive people attempting to live good lives, earnestly seeking the truth.

These movies exist to make clear where one ought to stand, and if there is doubt, they will offer proof. Reasonable scholarly arguments are used to support belief in the historical Jesus. Anecdotal evidence is provided to convey the need for salvation offered by the eternal Christ. Accepted on these terms, faith will make sense to those who already believe.

However, these movies are unlikely to convert unbelievers, because they demand a type of belief in God that requires unassailable evidence. The problem is that for those who live a life of faith, certitude is something that we seldom find. Evidence for God's existence can always be questioned.

Where Christian movies get it right is in recognizing that the world needs depictions of people who are willing to perform the disorienting feat of living the Gospel. Where these movies get it wrong is in defining the place where most Christians need to defend their belief and in defining the



Photo courtesy of Pureflix

kind of proof they need to offer.

Faith in Christ costs a person everything. As Christians we will be asked to profess the equally implausible beliefs that Jesus rose from the dead and that we are supposed to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us. (Really, which is harder to believe?)

These are not merely words. We are asked to live by a Scripture and a code of virtue that we did not create, to dedicate our lives to service from which we may not benefit and to struggle daily to orient our actions to serving a God we cannot see.

The only proof we will ever have is observed in the power of Christ to transform the ways we live. The truth is that nothing other than the love of Christ, revealed in a Christian's life, has ever, or will ever serve as proof for the existence of God.

Paul Lickteig, S.J., a newly ordained priest, is studying Christology at the Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley, Calif.

A documentary on abortion that fails the women it portrays

When I started watching Tracy Droz Tragos's documentary "Abortion: Stories Women Tell," on HBO, I expected to be shaken—not only because abortion is such a brutal and violent injustice, but also because, we are told, women who choose to have an abortion often do so because of the dire circumstances they face.

Pro-life advocates must understand and address these challenges to welcoming a new child into the world if we are going to stop abortion. I thought the film would shed a light on these challenges, even if the "solution" portrayed was appalling.

"Abortion: Stories Women Tell" on HBO tells stories of real heartbreak and tragedy.



Photo courtesy of HBO

Yet when the film ended, I was disoriented and disturbed. Most of the stories involve real heartbreak and drama and tragedy. But we never linger with any of them long enough to build a serious connection with the women the director is profiling. This creates the uneasy sense that instead of engaging these women as persons, Tragos instrumentalizes them to push a political agenda.

Still, among the disjointed stories, a stunning and powerful testament to the reality of original sin hides in the film: the shocking realization that I, too, could very easily find myself the perpetrator of the gravest of sins, and only by the grace of God am I restrained. All of us are born into the sin of Cain; by grace are we kept as Abel. To learn to bear this in mind when ministering to those who have obtained an abortion is the most important lesson we might learn from a film like this.

Perhaps it is fitting that "Abortion: Stories Women Tell" is so disorienting and structurally disorganized. The stories we tell of the injustice that is abortion must be disorienting and insufficient because sin itself is disorienting and an overturning of the way our lives ought to be structured.

Tragos failed her subjects in the same way that we as a society have failed: We, too, owe the women and the unborn victims who come face to face with abortion much more consideration and support than they receive now.

Addie Mena is the D.C. correspondent for Catholic News Agency.

I Will Call You Each By Name

Readings: Acts 2:14-41, Ps 23, 1 Pt 2:20-25, Jn 10:1-10

Michael Simone, S.J., is an assistant professor of Scripture at Boston College School of Theology and Ministry.

The readings this week turn our attention away from the resurrection accounts and toward the establishment of the church at Pentecost. In the first reading, Peter shares the new community's membership requirements: "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." The second reading, also attributed to Peter, reminds us that the suffering and resurrection of Christ secured for us an eternal shepherd to guard us in all our ways.

Images of Christ the shepherd were popular in the early church. In part, this was because of a widespread motif in Greco-Roman art called the *kriophoros* (ram-bearer), which depicted a man shouldering a ram. Christians often changed the ram to a lamb, a subtle alteration that allowed them to display an image of the faith without provoking suspicion.

More important to the image's popularity was the Israelite tradition of God as shepherd. As shepherd of Israel, God protected the flock, provided it with food, kept it healthy and gathered its scattered members. Later, these became the duties of David and his royal successors, and our Gospel today shows that Jesus had inherited this task.

Jesus emphasizes the importance of calling the name of each member of his flock. Throughout John's Gospel, disciples' lives change when Jesus calls their name. Mary Magdalene, for example, did not recognize the risen Jesus until he said "Mary!" For Simon Peter, discipleship began only after Jesus nicknamed him "Rock." In today's Gospel passage, John extends that experience of hearing the shepherd's voice to every believer, "as the shepherd calls his own sheep by name and leads them out." When Jesus calls his followers personally, this summons transforms them and also gives them a place in the community of disciples. This is how Jesus fulfilled his duty to heal and restore the flock.

Jesus also protects his flock and provides for it. When he calls himself the "gate," he is probably referring to the practice, common across cultures, of a shepherd sleeping

You have now returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls. (1 Pt 2:25)



PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

When did Jesus call you by name?

Do people hear in you the voice of Christ?

For whom are you a "gate"? Can they rely on you as securely as on Jesus?

at the gate of a livestock corral. Stationed this way, the shepherd keeps out predators or thieves and saves the flock from wandering out into the night. The next day, the shepherd stands at the gate to call the sheep and lead them to the day's pasture. When Jesus promises to be the gate, he promises his followers that he will protect them and provide for them always. The flock might come under threat or even sustain some damage, but the shepherd is tireless in his efforts to heal it and make it whole again.

These readings prepare us for Pentecost, when the church takes on Jesus' mission. It is a time to reflect on our own efforts to live that mission. We do Christ's work when people encounter us as trustworthy guides and not as strangers. We do Christ's work when we place ourselves in harm's way for another's good. Just as Christ heals, protects and provides for us, so too must we for a scattered and anxious world.

Show Us the Father

Readings: Acts 6:1-7, Ps 33, 1 Pt 2:4-9, Jn 14:1-12

“Master, show us the Father, and that will be enough for us.” Hints throughout the Gospels indicate that the apostles did not share Jesus’ notions of God, even after they’d been with him for quite some time. To give but one example: When Samaritan villagers refused Jesus hospitality, James and John ask if they can call down fire upon them (an act Jesus forbids). Although they had been with Jesus since the beginning, they had not grasped his teachings on the Father’s mercy and evenhanded generosity. In John’s Gospel, from which our reading this week comes, Jesus repeatedly stressed his unity with the Father. Even in one of his final addresses, however, his disciples still do not recognize the significance of that teaching.

This is not surprising. Scripture says that God created humanity in the divine image and likeness, but it is more common to see humans imagining divinities much like themselves. Deities in classical mythology, although they could be noble and powerful, were subject to the same temptations and moral weaknesses as the humans who

worshipped them. Mesopotamian and Egyptian myths describe gods possessing the same qualities as the ideal king, blurring the line between royal and divine power. In our own day, some scholars have identified a set of beliefs, called “moralistic therapeutic deism,” that they claim is the default religion of many in the United States. Not surprisingly, the deity worshipped in this system has many of the qualities of a good American: approachable, eager to help solve problems, supportive of individual expression and generally tolerant of low-key affluence.

Our Gospel reading today reminds us that in Jesus, we encounter all we know of God. “The words I speak to you I do not speak on my own. The Father who dwells in me is doing his works.” This is a key teaching of John’s entire Gospel. Jesus is God’s only self-description, God’s only commandment and God’s only dream for humanity. In other words, if we model our life on Christ, not only will we be fulfilling God’s will, we will become the kind of humans God has always dreamt of and we will reflect God’s grace to all we meet. This is what Jesus means when he says, “No one can come to the Father except through me.” Only by believing in Christ and fashioning our lives after his can we become like the Father, who is perfect divine love.

Sometimes following Christ’s example means we take on a specific service, like the teachers and servants of the poor in the first reading. Sometimes discipleship is something more general, a spiritual stance that guides every decision. Either way, those who follow Christ, even when they have little worth in human eyes, become icons of the only true God. In the words of the second reading, such disciples are a “chosen race, a royal priesthood, a people of his own.” They are a sign of hope, confirming that God is still at work in the world and calling everyone “out of darkness and into his wonderful light.”

Michael Simone, S.J., is an assistant professor of Scripture at Boston College School of Theology and Ministry.

‘Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.’

(Jn 14:9)



PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

When you say the word *God*, what image comes to mind? How close is that image to the example of Jesus Christ?

How can your love be more like Christ’s?

How can your service be more like Christ’s?

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Game Show Philosophy

*'Jeopardy!' is a show for our time;
'Wheel of Fortune' is from another*

By John Conley



It's 7:00 PM. Like millions of other Americans, I am perched in front of what my grandmother called “the last vestige of Western civilization”: “Jeopardy!” With the dapper Alex Trebek as our cicerone, I try to out-guess the contestants as we negotiate state capitals, French monarchs and the Book of Exodus. “Jeopardy!” celebrates intelligence, memory, alertness and self-mastery, with luck occasionally making an entry. Fortunes can be won or lost on the Daily Double or Final Jeopardy. But even here, strategic skill is awarded—and applauded. Life here is rational. It is mastered through hard work, study, eagerness and fair play. Awards are commensurate with merit.

It's 7:30 PM. I rush to change the channel to avoid the Las Vegasque screams and set of “Wheel of Fortune.” At least, I used to. What at first seemed to be mindless entertainment seems to me now something more profound. It is a neon-lit reminder that much of what happens to us in life has nothing to do with our virtues or our vices. It simply happens. The audience’s yells of “Big money!” have no effect on whether the wheel will land on a vacation in Disneyworld or on Bankrupt. The intellectual acumen of the contestants does little to decide whether you walk away with a Camry or a \$99 toaster. Life here is guided by the blindfolded Dame Fortune through a wheel that suddenly turns kings into paupers. Life here is opaque, unreasonable and inscrutable.

Rather than being a recent out-cropping of American pop culture at its most vulgar, “Wheel of Fortune” is arguably our clearest survival of classical civilization. The goddess Fortuna presided over the wheel in Roman mythology, raining down health and illness, wealth and poverty, glory and disgrace in unpredictable turns of fate. Reversals of fortune rained down on the just and unjust alike. Things simply fell out of the hand of the blindfolded goddess. There was no reward or punishment. Events just happened.

The wheel of fortune would not appear to fit well with the Christian faith. Saint Augustine opposed it for the same reason he opposed astrology: it seemed to be a species of determinism, denying divine providence and denying the human agency of free will. But in the sixth century Boethius baptized it. The wheel was now at the service of divine causation, but that causation’s nature and purpose remained obscure. Dante, Chaucer and Shakespeare also planted the arbitrary wheel within the mystery of divine providence. The unpredictable was now an offshoot of a veiled divine wisdom. Medieval scientists routinely located the wheel churning behind the crystalline spheres moving the stars as it spun out the occasional surprise meteor or earthquake. With its theory of random selection, even contemporary Darwinism seems to detect the gyrations of the wheel in its account of biological evolution.

The wheel does not rule out human agency. On the contrary, in freedom we must respond to the unexpected disasters and bonanzas that crash down upon us. This is where the corporal and spiritual works of mercy are born. This is the foyer of justice and charity.

Most of us would prefer to live in the rational, predictable, merit-based subdivision of “Jeopardy!” But “Wheel of Fortune” points to a less rational world where goodness is often ignored and evil often triumphs. The wheel does not obscure the scandal of the suffering of the innocent and the scandal of the success of the indolent or unjust. It points to what is chaotic and inexplicable as we muddle through a world marked by chance—and, for the Christian, by the traces of an original sin. Even Vanna’s much-mocked silent performance each evening underlines that the wordless work of the wheel admits of no moral explanation. It just is. The world is simply there in its bobbing, weaving change.

Perhaps Pat, Vanna, Las Vegas and the wheel understand something about the unhinging nature of the real we forget at our peril.

John J. Conley, S.J., holds the Knott Chair in Philosophy and Theology at Loyola University Maryland in Baltimore, Md.

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