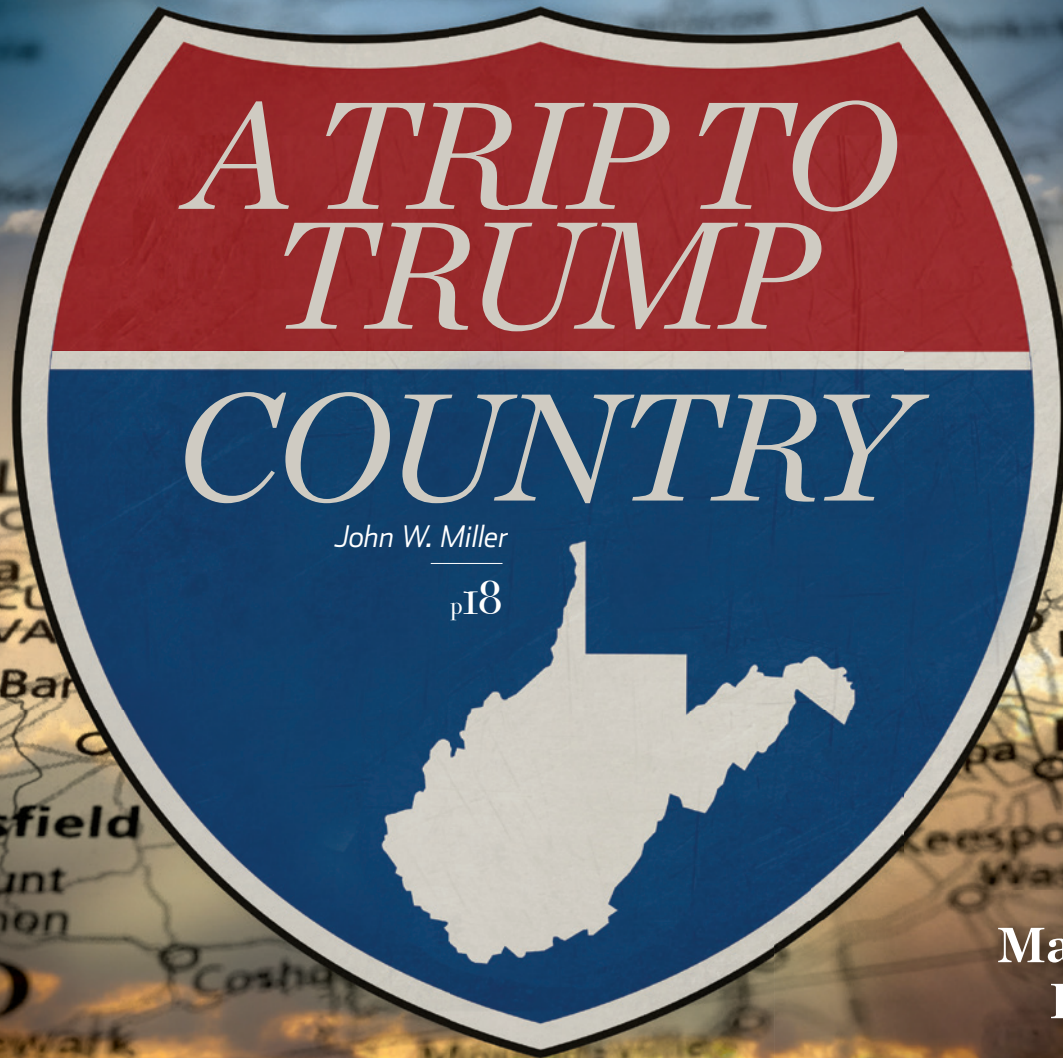


# America

FEBRUARY 19, 2018

THE JESUIT REVIEW OF FAITH AND CULTURE



## A TRIP TO TRUMP COUNTRY

*John W. Miller*

p18

Mary in the  
Rust Belt

p26

The Discomforts  
of Travel

p38

Argentina's Engineer  
Priest

p46



You are cordially invited by *America* magazine and American Bible Society to

# POPE FRANCIS FIVE YEARS IN REVIEW

**Featuring a conversation between  
His Eminence Timothy M. Cardinal Dolan,  
Archbishop of New York, and Matt Malone,  
S.J., editor in chief of *America* magazine**

Wednesday, March 7, 2018 | 6 p.m.

New York Athletic Club | President's Room  
180 Central Park South  
New York, NY 10019

Business attire required | Reception to follow

RSVP to [events@americamedia.org](mailto:events@americamedia.org).  
Seating is limited.

**America**  
THE JESUIT REVIEW OF FAITH AND CULTURE



CATHOLIC  
INITIATIVES

## Barbarians at the Gate

Earlier this month, I took part in a lively panel discussion concerning polarization in the church and civil society during the 2018 Catholic Social Ministry Gathering in Washington, D.C. A person in a job like mine is often called upon to take part in events like this. As a result, I often find I am repeating myself, though I may be the only one in the room who knows it. After all, how many fresh insights into faith and public life can one individual have? Still, from time to time, something new hits me—not exactly an epiphany, perhaps, but some greater clarity about a problem.

Just a few minutes into our conversation about the causes of polarization, as I surveyed the crowd of 300 or so Catholic ministers, it dawned on me that one of the primary causes of polarization is the almost instinctive belief that it is something that is mainly caused by someone else. It seemed that few of us in the hotel ballroom thought that we might in some way be a part of the problem, by what we have done and failed to do. Our presupposition was that polarization was something that was happening to us, rather than something we might be causing. And we were quick to point the finger at various suspects, President Trump chief among them. But while Mr. Trump is an uncommonly cynical manipulator of polarization—and its principal beneficiary—he is not its primary cause.

The first causes of polarization, as well as of the fierce ideological partisanship that fuels it, antedate Mr. Trump's political ascent by decades. It reminds me of something the late W. Norris Clarke, S.J., used to tell me during my philosophy tutorials: Moral crises are preceded by metaphysical

and epistemological confusion. In other words, the cause of the present lies in our past: more tectonic social changes; previous shifts in our collective and individual understandings of the nature of the world and how we come to know it. What I like about this way of thinking is that it is inclusive. These social and political phenomena, in other words, are not things that merely happen to us, but events we actively participate in and are responsible for. It puts the “we” back in “we the people.”

There is also a “we” in the Declaration of Independence: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.” As the late John Courtney Murray, S.J., observed, that famous phrase involves an important philosophical presupposition—namely, that truths exist and that we hold some of them. If they are self-evident, moreover, then these truths are objective realities; they exist independently of whether we think they do. In recent decades, however, an important socio-cultural shift has taken place. More and more we now live in a world where truth, rather than something we discover, an objective reality that presents itself to our subjective judgements, is instead something individuals make and determine for themselves. If that is the case, then the claim that there are self-evident truths that we collectively hold becomes meaningless, and the public argument descends into a cacophony of emotive self-assertions, which lend themselves to polarization.

You see the problem. The solution is not so clear. A recovery of the philosophical milieu of the Declaration of Independence seems unrealistic. Still, even if the solution is unclear, the method of devising the solution is well

established. It is called philosophy. By philosophy I do not mean wearing a black turtleneck, smoking clove cigarettes and wondering whether trees dream. I mean rather the art and science of argument, which exposes the deeper meaning, coherence and relevance of various propositions, like “all men are created equal.”

What's clear to me is that the public debate is devoid of such rigor and that we must restore it if we are to discern a collective path forward. In order to do that, however, we must first rescue academic philosophy from its largely self-induced irrelevance.

Here is where Catholic schools especially can make a difference. “The truest boast of the Catholic university,” Theodore Hesburgh, C.S.C., once wrote in *America*, “is that they are committed to adequacy of knowledge, which in effect means that philosophy and theology are cherished as special ways of knowing, of ultimate importance.”

Of course, one can be an informed and engaged citizen without philosophical training. Most of us are. But without public intellectuals trained in philosophy and its methods to guide our public argument, chaos will surely ensue. “As a public philosophy,” Father Murray wrote, “the American consensus needs to be constantly argued. If the public argument dies from disinterest, or subsides into the angry mutterings of polemic, or rises to the shrillness of hysteria, or trails off into positivistic triviality, or gets lost in a morass of semantics, you may be sure that the barbarian is at the gates of the city.”

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



# THE ISSUE

## GIVE AND TAKE

---

6  
YOUR TAKE  
How do you think Pope Francis handles the issue of sexual abuse?

8  
OUR TAKE  
Toward a bipartisan prolife movement; an impossible choice on immigration

10  
SHORT TAKE  
Trump's character flaws undermine his own policies  
Daniel Allott

## DISPATCHES

---

12  
A NATION IN CRISIS?  
Hondurans take to streets to protest election fraud

Young Catholics see church as "unkind" on L.G.B.T. issues

China tightens state control over religious life

## FEATURES

---

18  
WAITING FOR MORNING IN MOUNDSVILLE  
Can Donald Trump save a West Virginia town?  
John W. Miller

26  
OUR LADY OF PRINCE STREET  
In search of a missing statue  
Sonia Livingston



Korea Post/Winhapp via AP

South and North Korean skiers attend their joint training at the Masik Pass ski resort in North Korea, on Feb. 1. North Korean skiers and skaters on Thursday arrived at a South Korean airport to participate in the Winter Olympics that has brought a temporary lull in tensions surrounding their country's nuclear program.

## FAITH IN FOCUS

---

38

### WRONG TURNS

Why travel if you are not going to get a little lost?

Anthony R. Lusvardi, S.J.

42

### A Jesuit sets a new pace on the Camino

Raymond A. Schroth, S.J.

## VANTAGE POINT

---

44

### AN AMERICAN LENT

1978

## IDEAS IN REVIEW

---

46

### COWBOY, ENGINEER, SAINT

On the trail of St. José Brochero  
Catherine Addington

### BOOKS

*An Odyssey; Is This All There Is?*  
*Why Buddhism is True; Kids These Days*

### CULTURE

The sale of "Salvator Mundi"

### POEM

Questions After Jacopo Bassano's  
"Lazarus and the Rich Man"

Philip Metres

## THE WORD

---

58

How can you recommit yourself to God's call?

How can you "cleanse your temple" this Lent?

Michael Simone

## LAST TAKE

---

62

### SERRIN M. FOSTER

Feminists for Life works to end the factors that drive women to abortion

## How do you rate Pope Francis' handling of sex abuse in the church?

In response to the question above, asked on social media and in our email newsletter, **America** readers gave mostly lukewarm responses. Thirty-one percent of readers rated Pope Francis' handling of sex abuse in the church as "somewhat positive," while 30 percent of readers told us it was "somewhat negative."

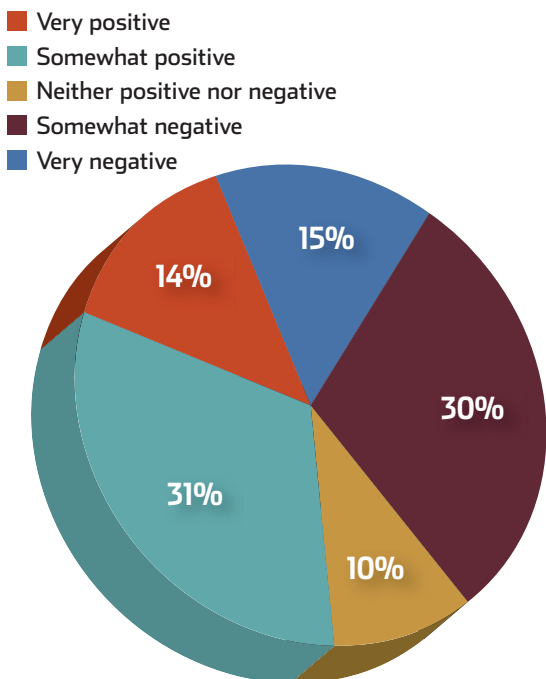
On the whole, respondents who answered either "very positive" (14 percent) or "somewhat positive" (31 percent) highlighted how Pope Francis is listening to victims of abuse. "Pope Francis has been a very heartfelt contributor to those families who are still suffering from the effects of sex abuse at the hands of clergy," wrote Rylee Hartwell of Joplin, Mo.

Most of those in the "somewhat positive" camp expressed a desire for Pope Francis to do more to prevent and address sex abuse in the church. Chris Carroll of Philadelphia alluded to Pope Francis' defense of Bishop Juan Barros, who has been accused of being present during instances of sex abuse by the notorious Chilean predator, the Rev. Fernando Karadima. "The pope has not gone as far as I would like," said Mr. Carroll. "The church is still protecting some clergy."

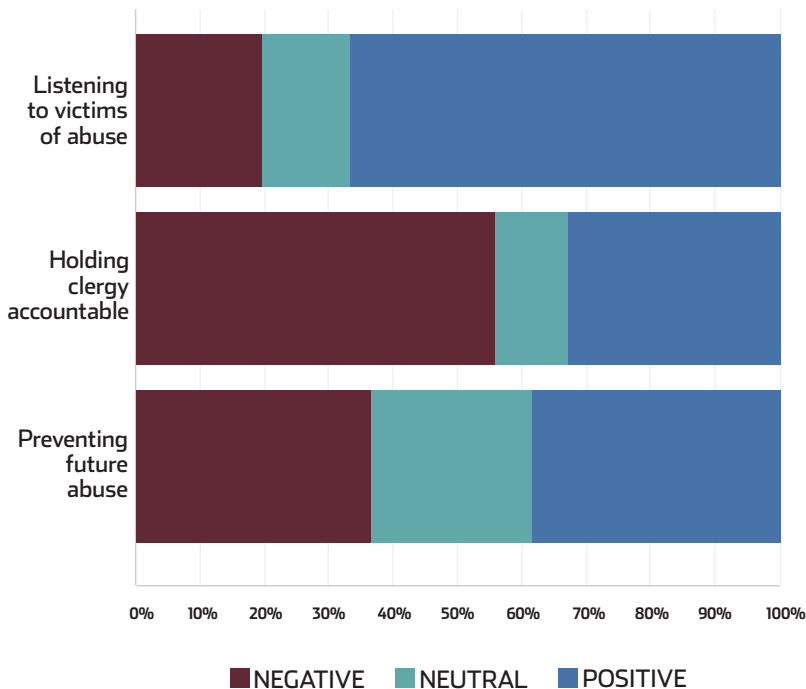
Respondents who rated Pope Francis' handling of sex abuse in the church as "very negative" (15 percent) or "somewhat negative" (30 percent) were particularly critical of what they saw as the pope's failure to hold members of the clergy accountable. These readers also criticized his efforts to prevent future abuse. John Bauer of Biloxi, Miss., described the pope's leadership on this issue as "somewhat negative" in response to this question. "I love this pope," Mr. Bauer wrote. "He is wonderful in all his teaching and pastoral care. But this area is a weak point."

Kristen Balan-DiBella of Westfield, Ind., said that Pope Francis' attempts to hold clergy accountable for sex abuse have been insufficient. "Pope Francis, through his decisions to keep Cardinal Bernard Law at the Vatican, including having his burial there, as well as his insistence on Bishop Barros's innocence, shows a distinct lack of understanding of sex abuse," said Ms. Balan-DiBella. "The percentage of false accusations is almost nil. The lifelong, far-reaching detrimental effects of sex abuse are widely known. The research is very clear that sex abuse (including those who are accessories) is a heinous crime. Nothing less than denouncing the acts and the abusers/accomplices will suffice."

HOW DO YOU RATE POPE FRANCIS' HANDLING OF SEX ABUSE IN THE CHURCH?



RATE POPE FRANCIS' HANDLING OF SEX ABUSE IN THE CHURCH IN THE FOLLOWING AREAS



### A Well-Constructed Study

Re “Community Colleges Need Church Support (Our Take, 2/5): This is an excellent editorial, bringing the findings of a well-constructed study into the social justice discussion. The Notre Dame-University of Maryland study (worth reading!) strongly suggests that graduation success among low-income community college students—especially women—can be substantially improved by frequent interaction with professional caseworkers.

These caseworkers help students deal with challenges beyond the academic realm, and so the student’s improved academic performance cannot necessarily be replicated by providing access to substantial funds for financial emergencies. Pope Benedict XVI wrote, “Charity does not exclude knowledge, but rather requires, promotes, and animates it from within.” Pope Francis urges “an integral promotion of the poor that goes beyond a simple welfare mentality.” We need more articles like this.

**Joseph J. Dunn**

Online Comment

### Hopes and Dreams

Re “Martin Scorsese Has Something to Say About Immigration,” by Antonio De Loera-Brust (2/5): It is the last century’s immigrants who are responding worst to this century’s immigrants. Descendants of the original English settlers in the 1600s (like me) are used to receiving immigrants. The road to success in this country is bringing your wonderful cooking, your music, your hopes, dreams and willingness to work and play with you.

**Jan Kaeding**

Online Comment

### Promote Social Justice

Re “Changing Hearts and Structures,” by Bishop George V. Murry, S.J. (2/5): Thank you, **America**. I think other media outlets can do a better job of promoting social justice. As the universal church, which is supposed to make disciples of all nations and all peoples, I think Catholic media can do a better job of promoting this dimension of our faith.

**Michael Greenan**

Online Comment

### What About Sunnis?

Re “Aramaic Comes to America,” by Matthew Petti (2/5): Why should Aramaic speakers be distinguished from other Middle Eastern communities? All are human beings made

in the image and likeness of God. Both Muslims and Christians are suffering in places like Iraq and Syria. It looks to me as though it is Syrian Sunnis and Iraqi Sunnis who are now most in danger.

How many Sunnis have been killed; how many are refugees because of the Assad and Iraqi Shiite governments and the West’s refusal to stop them? I speak as someone who has roots in Aleppo, in the descendants of the early Christians. The anti-Muslim bigots in the United States use Middle Eastern Christians to prop up their hateful anti-Arab, anti-Muslim propaganda.

**Rose-Ellen Caminer**

Online Comment

### Worried by Refugees?

Re “Trump Policy Shift Could Close Catholic Charities Refugee Offices,” by Kevin Clarke (2/5): I work in refugee resettlement. These are legal refugees who come, often having been promised admission because they worked for the U.S. Army in Afghanistan at great danger to themselves. They settle in, get jobs, often ones that no one wants, and their children learn English, go to college and become people who support our economy.

Some think we can just help refugees in their own country. They say, “It’s our country; we need to protect it.” Funny, that is probably what Native American tribes said, too. Are critics worried about protecting the country from the refugees? Who committed the mass murders in Las Vegas, Charleston, Sandy Hook? Not refugees.

**Ann Johnson**

Online Comment

### Something Common

Re “Banjo-Pickin’ for Jesus: the Bluegrass Music of ‘The Hillbilly Thomists’” by Stephen Bullivant (2/5): How about singing the ordinary in Latin chant? There is a seemingly endless push by music directors and songwriters to come up with new melodies for the ordinary parts of the Mass. So whenever you visit a different parish or even return to your old parish it seems that the ordinary has a different tune.

The move to take Latin completely out of the Mass has divided the Catholic community into language groups that seldom intermix, and this is balkanizing the Catholic faithful. If the ordinary were kept in Latin, it would provide something common to all the faithful throughout the world.

**Edward Wassell**

Online Comment

## An Impossible Choice on Immigration

Throughout the negotiations over the future of the so-called Dreamers, President Trump's shifting and often contradictory positions have flummoxed leaders in both parties. How the president came down on the terms of any DACA deal seemed to vary by the hour. But no longer. President Trump has said twice now he is prepared to offer a path to citizenship for as many as 1.8 million undocumented immigrants, including the roughly 690,000 currently enrolled in the DACA program. But while Mr. Trump's willingness to entertain a path to citizenship represents a welcome departure, the rest of the proposed deal's terms are deeply troubling.

In exchange for citizenship for Dreamers, President Trump demands both \$25 billion for a border wall and a dramatic restructuring of the system for legal immigration. Not only would there be an end to the diversity visa lottery, but the immigration package would put an end to what the Trump administration has branded chain migration. What were previously un-

derstood as family reunification visas would be restricted to spouses and minor children. No parents, no siblings, not even adult children would be included. According to a study by the Cato Institute, the Trump plan could reduce the number of legal immigrants to the United States this year by almost half.

Mr. Trump's proposal represents an almost complete reversal of previous Republican immigration priorities. Republican resistance to a path to citizenship for undocumented residents had been understood to be based, at least nominally, on opposition to rewarding law-breaking with immigrant amnesty.

While many opposed what they regarded as amnesty for undocumented people, most Republican leaders have long insisted their intention was not to reduce legal immigration significantly. But now Mr. Trump, with significant Republican support, is proposing cutting the number in half. This policy is popular enough with the ascendant nativist wing of the party that they have

offered in return for the cutback the long-derided "amnesty." It is a whip-lash-inducing shift in policy goals.

By adding legal immigration to his targets, Mr. Trump has revealed a desire to resist a long-term demographic trend toward greater diversity. He seems to believe that by holding the Dreamers hostage, he can secure his restrictionist policy goals.

For Democrats the choice is now between protecting immigrants who are here already and those who are yet to come. It is an impossible choice.

What was once a question of how to best deal with the country's large undocumented immigrant population has now become a debate about the future of all immigrants, regardless of status. The identity of the United States as a nation of immigrants is under attack. Against this revived nativism, which now sees even lawful, family-based immigration as a threat, the nation's commitment to remaining what John Winthrop, John F. Kennedy and Ronald Reagan called a "city upon a hill" requires fierce defending.

## Appalling Partisanship on Abortion

"Appalling." Thus did Cardinal Timothy Dolan, archbishop of New York and chair of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Pro-Life Activities, succinctly describe the U.S. Senate's failure on Jan. 29 to pass the Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act. The bill, passed by the House of Representatives last fall, which proposed to ban abortions after 20 weeks of pregnancy, failed to clear the 60-vote threshold needed to avoid a filibuster and proceed to a final floor

vote. The tally was 51 in favor and 46 against. Two pro-choice Republicans voted against the bill, while three pro-life Democratic senators voted for it.

Why 20 weeks? Supporters of the measure have cited medical studies showing that a fetus can feel pain at that point in its development. Additionally, medical advances have pushed back the boundary of viability for premature births to 22 weeks in some cases. But even federal legislation outlawing abor-

tions after 20 weeks would leave the United States an outlier compared with almost all other developed nations. In most member countries of the European Union, for example, abortion is illegal after 12 weeks except under specific circumstances. These include risk of death or serious illness for the mother. Pro-choice absolutists in the United States are defending a status quo considered extreme in all but six other countries: Canada, China, the Netherlands, North Korea, Singa-



pore and Vietnam.

The Republican leadership in the Senate clearly knew that the abortion bill had little chance of passing. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that they brought it to a vote simply to highlight the political positions of pro-choice Democrats in red-leaning states, to remind pro-life voters in those states that their elected senators favored legal abortion. But amid the partisan political maneuvering, three true profiles in courage could be found: the Democratic Senators Joe Manchin of West Virginia, Bob Casey Jr. of Pennsylvania and Joe Donnelly of Indiana, all of whom bucked their party and voted for the bill. They deserve the full-throated support of every pro-life American.

The most effective tactical response the Democrats could adopt in the face of Republicans using abortion as a wedge issue in close races would be to stop insisting on a pro-choice position as a litmus test for candidates. Sadly, this is something the Democratic Party is unwilling to do. This refusal among many in the party to accept or even discuss any legal restrictions at all on abortion reveals an absolutism that is both an affront to justice and a serious impediment to any attempt at bipartisanship.

As the failure of the Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act clearly shows, bipartisanship will be necessary to pass any meaningful federal legislation that changes the current stalemate on abortion. The pro-life movement should prioritize expanding its reach across party lines. It is the only way to bring the possibility of lasting legal protections for unborn children closer to reality.

<b>President and Editor in Chief</b>	Matt Malone, S.J.
<b>Executive Editors</b>	Maurice Timothy Reidy Sam Sawyer, S.J. Kerry Weber Jeremy Zipple, S.J. James Martin, S.J.
<b>Editor at Large</b>	Robert C. Collins, S.J.
<b>Production Editor</b>	Kevin Clarke
<b>Senior Editors</b>	James T. Keane J. D. Long-García Edward W. Schmidt, S.J.
<b>Poetry Editor</b>	Joseph Hoover, S.J.
<b>Vatican Correspondent</b>	Gerard O'Connell
<b>National Correspondent</b>	Michael O'Loughlin
<b>Associate Editors</b>	José Dueño, S.J. Ashley McKinless Olga Segura Robert David Sullivan Eric Sundrup, S.J.
<b>Assistant Editors</b>	Zachary Davis Joseph McAuley
<b>Editorial Assistant</b>	Vivian Cabrera
<b>Producer</b>	Eloise Blondiau
<b>Creative Director</b>	Shawn Tripoli
<b>Contributing Writers</b>	Elizabeth Bruenig Brendan Busse, S.J. Nichole M. Flores Pascal-Emmanuel Gobry Cecilia González-Andrieu Leah Libresco Jim McDermott, S.J. Kaya Oakes Nathan Schneider Stephanie Slade Eve Tushnet
<b>Contributing Editors</b>	Ellen Boegel Patrick Gilger, S.J. Adam Hincks, S.J. Maryann Cusimano Love Paul McNelis, S.J.
<b>Regional Correspondents</b>	Dean Dettloff (Toronto) Anthony Egan, S.J. (Johannesburg) Jan-Albert Hootsen, S.J. (Mexico City) Jim McDermott, S.J. (Los Angeles) Timothy Padgett (Miami) Russell Pollitt, S.J. (Johannesburg) David Stewart, S.J. (London) Verna Yu (Hong Kong)
<b>Special Contributors</b>	Jake Martin, S.J., Sean Salai, S.J.
<b>Editor, The Jesuit Post</b>	Daniel N. Gustafson, S.J.
<b>Moderator, Catholic Book Club</b>	Kevin Spinale, S.J.
<b>O'Hare Fellows</b>	Angelo Jesus Canta Antonio de Loera-Brust Colleen Dulle
<b>Executive V.P. &amp; C.O.O.</b>	Ted Nadeau
<b>V.P. for Finance and Operations</b>	Rosa M. Del Saz
<b>Director of Advertising Services</b>	Kenneth Arko
<b>Director of Marketing</b>	Louis Cassetta
<b>Director of Advancement</b>	Heather Trotta
<b>Associate Director of Advancement</b>	James Cappabianca
<b>Advertising Operations Manager</b>	Chris Keller
<b>Special Assistant to the President</b>	
<b>and Editor in Chief</b>	Nicholas D. Sawicki
<b>Business Operations Staff</b>	Anastasia Buraminskaya, Glenda Castro Karina Clark, Ana Nuñez, Ryan Richardson, Elena Te Raymond A. Schroth, S.J. Francis W. Turnbull, S.J. Susan S. Braddock
<b>Editors Emeriti</b>	
<b>Chair, Board of Directors</b>	
americamagazine.org	1212 Avenue of the Americas, 11th Fl.
facebook.com/americanmag	New York, NY 10036
twitter.com/americanmag	America Press Inc. d/b/a America Media ©2018

## Even some Trump supporters worry that his character is undermining his presidency

A little over a year into Donald J. Trump's presidency, here is what we know. To the extent that his presidency is failing—and Mr. Trump's historically low approval ratings in the 30s suggest many people believe it is failing—it is not his policies that are to blame but rather his character.

Mr. Trump is impulsive, superficial, crass, cruel, unpredictable and undisciplined. In the 2016 election, many voters overlooked these flaws in the belief that he would study up, grow up and become more presidential once in office. But that has not happened, and his behavior is unnerving even to some of his supporters.

I have spent the last year speaking with voters in counties that were pivotal to Mr. Trump's election victory. The most common refrain I have heard from Trump supporters and critics alike is that they wish he would cut out his personal attacks on political opponents.

"Mr. President, please stop the negative tweets," Mark Locklear of Robeson County, N.C., wrote me last July when I asked him what advice he would give at the six-month mark of the new presidency. Mr. Locklear voted for Mr. Trump after twice voting for Barack Obama. He gave the president an A on policy but lowered his overall grade to a C because of Mr. Trump's injudicious use of Twitter.

I received similar responses when I surveyed people on the anniversary of Mr. Trump's inauguration. Primit Patel, an Indian-American hotel owner, also in Robeson County, said he voted for Mr. Trump out of an appreciation for his business acumen. While pleased

with the new tax reform law, Mr. Patel labeled the president's first year "erratic" and is afraid his bellicosity will provoke an international disaster.

Lois Morales of Orange County, Calif., said she thinks Mr. Trump is performing well "except for not shutting up. His actions need to speak louder than his words."

Mr. Trump's character flaws obscure the popularity of many of his administration's policies. A recent Harvard-Harris poll found that most voters support a more restrictive, merit-based immigration system, and numerous polls show that a majority of Americans approve of Mr. Trump's handling of the economy. Mr. Trump's selection of Neil Gorsuch to the Supreme Court was praised even by some political opponents.

But Mr. Trump's poor character is not just costing him style points. It is hindering his ability to govern.

To many on Capitol Hill, the president is simply too unpredictable to trust. Before the government shutdown in January, Mr. Trump made wildly contradictory statements about where he stood on the funding impasse, leaving many lawmakers bewildered and annoyed. In negotiations to keep the government open, said Senator Susan Collins, Republican of Maine, "The president's role has been extraordinarily confusing."

Mr. Trump was even more unpredictable in the related debate over the fate of DACA recipients, immigrants brought illegally to the United States as children. One day Mr. Trump would signal support for a compromise that granted them legal status. The next

day he would take a much harder line, use racially charged language or mock a Democratic senator involved in the meetings, calling the Senate minority leader, Chuck Schumer, "Cryin' Chuck." Mr. Trump's capriciousness led Mr. Schumer to say that dealing with him is "like negotiating with Jell-O."

While the government shutdown should not be pinned on Mr. Trump, the self-styled master negotiator did not help matters. The government reopened after two days not because he negotiated some master deal but because he largely stayed out of the debate and off Twitter, while Congress worked out a temporary deal to turn the lights back on.

Mr. Trump's erratic behavior and habit of publicly attacking members of his own cabinet are also draining morale in the executive branch and have led to a record number of White House departures in his first year. As one State Department official told a reporter: "One can never be sure whether the policies we're working on will be supported by the president or not. It creates a great deal of uncertainty and obviously further harms morale in an environment in which morale is already very low."

The confusion, distrust and ill will caused by Mr. Trump's poor character are undermining his presidency. Whether they also make him a one-term president remains to be seen.

---

Daniel Allott is the author of *The Race to 2020: The People and Places That Will Define a Presidency* and formerly the *Washington Examiner's* deputy commentary editor.

# Are you looking for ways to connect the Gospel and contemporary times for your students?

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Doctrine is hosting a conference for untenured theologians.



## THEOLOGY: CONNECTING THE DISCONNECTS

Bishop Robert Barron  
Dr. John Cavadini  
Bishop Daniel Flores

Dr. Moira McQueen  
Dr. Cyril O'Regan  
Dr. John Grabowski

The conference will take place at the Liaison Capitol Hill Hotel in Washington, D.C. from **September 13-14, 2018**.

Eligible applicants are faculty members currently teaching undergraduate theology, having received their Ph.D. within the last 5 years. Applications are due **Friday, March 23, 2018**. Travel, room, and board will be provided for by a grant from the Knights of Columbus.

To apply for participation in this event, go to [USCCB.ORG/doctrine](http://USCCB.ORG/doctrine). Follow the link to 'Conference for Theologians' for application form.

## THE JESUIT RETREAT CENTER OF LOS ALTOS, CALIFORNIA UPCOMING RETREATS

### SHOULDER TO SHOULDER: THE FR. GREG BOYLE, S.J. RETREAT April 13-15

Fr. Greg Boyle, S.J.  
Witness the miracles that God has performed with former gang members

### WOMEN'S WEEKEND OF RENEWAL April 20-22

Ms. Mary Abinante and Ms. Cynthia Robertson  
Come away to nourish your mind, body and soul

### DISCIPLESHIP AND SPIRITUAL GROWTH April 20-22

Fr. Kevin Leidich, S.J.  
Learn more about St. Ignatius' spiritual pilgrimage

### A FAITH THAT DOES JUSTICE April 27-29

Fr. Sean Carroll, S.J.  
How does Christ encourage us to promote social justice?

### BUSY PERSON'S DAY OF RETREAT April 29

Fr. Andrew Rodriguez, S.J.  
A day to retreat and refresh your spirit

### 5-DAY GUIDED RETREAT\* May 16-20

Fr. Andrew Rodriguez, S.J. and Fr. Chi Ngo, S.J.  
Experience silence, prayer and reflection to find God's grace

*\*Silent Retreat*

[www.jrclosaltos.org](http://www.jrclosaltos.org) |  
(650) 917-4000



# OVERDOSE DEATHS, INFANT MORTALITY AND REDUCED LIFE EXPECTANCY:

## *indicators of a nation in crisis?*

Around the world, pockets of poverty and conflict make it acutely dangerous to be a child. In Afghanistan hundreds of children were killed last year by improvised explosive devices; scores have been killed by Russian, Syrian, Saudi- and U.S.-led coalition air strikes over Syria, Iraq and Yemen. Drug gangs have murdered uncooperative teens in El Salvador, and errant mortars have claimed children's lives in Ukraine.

It can be daunting indeed to say which state is the most perilous for children, but a recent study described one nation that does not have the excuse of civil war or crushing poverty to explain the hazards its children confront. According to research published in the journal *Health Affairs* in January, the United States is "the most dangerous of wealthy nations for a child to be born into."

It is well known that among its peer states in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, the United States suffers the highest rate of infant mortality, but the new study describes the problem in stark detail. From 2001 to 2010, there were 69 infant deaths per 10,000 births in the United States, a rate 76 percent higher than the rate of 39 per 10,000 experienced by the 19 other affluent states in the O.E.C.D.

An arrangement of pills of the opioid oxycodone-acetaminophen, also known as Percocet.

And the bad news does not end at infancy. During the period covered by the Health Affairs report, American children who survived their first 12 months were 57 percent more likely to die before reaching adulthood. And by an array of other social markers, the United States lagged far behind Canada, Norway, Sweden and the 16 other O.E.C.D. states included in the study.

“The care of children is a basic moral responsibility of our society,” wrote the study’s authors, led by Dr. Ashish Thakrar, a resident in internal medicine at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore. “The U.S. outspends every other nation on health care per capita for children, yet outcomes remain poor.”

The leading cause of death among U.S. infants was premature birth, three times more likely to affect American babies than those born in peer states. Car accidents were the leading cause of death for teens 15 to 19—twice the rate of the other nations included in the study—but the second-leading cause of death in that age group was firearm assaults. The report finds that the risk of gun deaths in the United States was 82 times higher than in peer nations.

All O.E.C.D. states have made significant progress in reducing infant mortality since the 1960s, back when the United States was leading its O.E.C.D. peers; but beginning in the early 1970s, those nations begin to move ahead of the United States, and by 2010 they had leaped far beyond it. According to researchers, if the United States had performed as well as its peer states, about 623,000 deaths—90 percent of them among teens and children—could have been avoided between 1961 and 2010. “There is not a single category for which the O.E.C.D.-19 had higher mortality rates than the U.S. over the last three decades of our analysis,” the study authors conclude.

Lack of access to adequate pre- and post-natal care appears to be a significant driver of high infant and childhood mortality in the United States. As U.S. progress remains stunted, said Mr. Thakrar, “now is not the time to defund the programs that support our children’s health.”

The study was released just a few days before Congress finally horse-traded a restoration of the Children’s Health Insurance Program that was months overdue, leaving many

states on the verge of shutting down their federally funded programs. That precarious, politicized approach to health care is one of the prime drivers of both the high cost and poor outcomes of the fragmented U.S. system, according to the report.

U.S. health care is consistently the world’s most expensive, but the nation continues to accept coverage lapses based on the ability to pay that are unknown in other O.E.C.D. nations. The Obama administration’s Affordable Care Act led to the highest health-insurance enrollment numbers in decades, but it still left millions of Americans out of coverage. That means thousands of U.S. families forego the care they need until health crises emerge.

The alarm sounded in Health Affairs is not the only recent indication of U.S. health care in crisis. The National Center for Health Statistics reported in December that U.S. life expectancy had declined for the second year in a row in 2016. The last time U.S. life expectancy dipped was in 1993 during the AIDS crisis, but the nation has not seen a two-year decline since 1962-63, during a particularly grim influenza outbreak.

Gun violence is a contributor to diminished U.S. life expectancy that is essentially unknown in other advanced nations. According to a study released in 2016 in the *American Journal of Medicine*, homicide rates in the United States were seven times higher than in other high-income countries, driven by a gun homicide rate that was 25 times higher. The overall firearm death rate in the United States from all causes, including suicide and accidents, was 10 times higher than in the other high-income nations that were included in the study. Of the total firearm deaths among all the tracked populations, 90 percent of women, 91 percent of children from infancy to 14 years, 92 percent of youth 15 to 24 years and 82 percent of all people killed by firearms were in the United States.

Among other major contributors to the downward trend in life expectancy, the nation’s opioid crisis appears to be having an impact. In 2016, overdose deaths leaped 21 percent higher than the already devastating 2015 numbers. With more than 63,600 deaths, overdoses claimed more lives in 2016 alone than the 43,000 who died during the

AIDS crisis peak in 1995 and significantly more than the 58,000 total U.S. combat deaths during the Vietnam War. Health experts fear the numbers for 2017 will be even worse and that damage from the opioid crisis will continue until a stronger, comprehensive response confronts the crisis. So far, they complain, political rhetoric has been more forthcoming, from the federal

level down, than practical programming and the federal and state monies to fund them.

Without a significant intervention soon, the United States may see a life expectancy decline three years in a row, a statistical feat last achieved 100 years ago during the global Spanish flu epidemic.

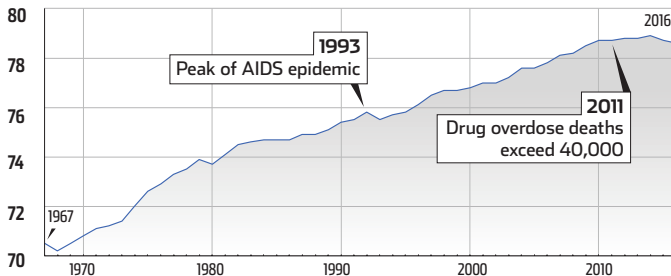
Kevin Clarke, *chief correspondent*. Twitter: @ClarkeAtAmerica.

#### U.S. LIFE EXPECTANCY

**2014: 78.9** | **2015: 78.7** | **2016: 78.6**

First time since the early 1960s that it has dropped two years in a row

#### U.S. LIFE EXPECTANCY AT BIRTH



#### LIFE EXPECTANCY IN PEER NATIONS

	1970	2015
United States	70.8	78.7
O.E.C.D.* average	70.1	80.6

\*35 wealthy nations including Canada, Japan, Mexico and most of Europe.

#### CHILDHOOD MORTALITY (2001-10)

A CHILD BORN IN THE U.S. HAD A **GREATER CHANCE OF DYING BEFORE ADULTHOOD** **70%** THAN CHILDREN BORN INTO 19 OTHER O.E.C.D. NATIONS

#### LEADING CAUSES OF DEATH

CAUSE OF DEATH	DEATHS PER 100,000	% CHANGE 2015-16
Unintentional injury (includes overdoses)	47.0	9.7
Alzheimer's	30.3	3.1
Suicide	13.5	1.5
Stroke	37.3	-0.8
Diabetes	21.0	-1.4
Cancer	155.8	-1.7
Heart disease	165.5	-1.8
Kidney disease	13.1	-2.2
Lower respiratory disease	40.6	-2.4
Influenza/pneumonia	13.5	-11.2

#### MATERNAL MORTALITY (2015)

Every year in the U.S., 700 to 900 women die from pregnancy or childbirth-related causes, the worst record in the developed world.

(deaths from pregnancy-related causes per 100,000 births)

United States	26.4	Australia	5.5
United Kingdom	9.2	Ireland	4.7
Germany	9.0	Sweden	4.4
France	7.8	Italy	4.2
Canada	7.3	Finland	3.8

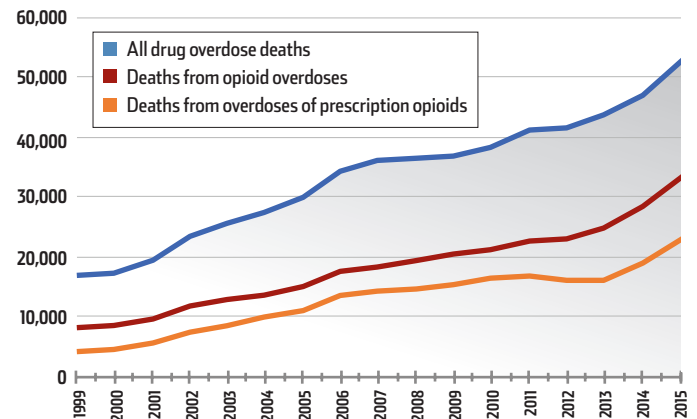
**1990: 16.9** | **2000: 17.5** | **2015: 26.4**

#### INFANT MORTALITY RATES, 2015 (PER 1,000 LIVE BIRTHS)

**U.S. TOTAL: 5.9** | **O.E.C.D. AVERAGE: 3.9**

All 50 states have infant mortality rates higher than the O.E.C.D. average.

#### DEATH BY OVERDOSE



#### SHARE OF DRUG OVERDOSE DEATHS CAUSED BY PRESCRIPTION OPIOIDS

**1999: 24%** | **2015: 43%**

Sources: "U.S. life expectancy declines for a second straight year," The Washington Post, Dec. 21, 2017; "Mortality in the United States, 2016," National Center for Health Statistics, U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services; Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development; "Child Mortality In The US And 19 OECD Comparator Nations: A 50-Year Time-Trend Analysis," Health Affairs, January 2018; "Global, Regional, and National Levels of Maternal Mortality, 1990-2015," The Lancet, October 2016; Overdose Death Rates, National Institute on Drug Abuse.

Editor's Note: In the Feb. 5 issue, "Is Higher Education Worth Its Soaring Costs?" incorrectly compared average annual tuition to family median annual income. The comparison should have been to personal median income; the accompanying chart was correct.

## 'Why does the church hate gay people?' Boston bishop seeks to listen to young adults



CNS photo/David Maung

A Mass in October 2017 in San Diego marked the 20th Anniversary of "Always Our Children," a pastoral message to families with L.G.B.T. members from the U.S. bishops' marriage and family life committee.

that ministry involves listening, including to "the many young adults who have nothing but skepticism and doubt when they think of the Catholic Church."

Many students tell him they see the church as "unkind" on L.G.B.T. issues, which he thinks is driven in part by media reports that tell them "we're a bigoted church" and that Catholics are "bullies."

"As a generation," he said of today's high school students, "they're kindhearted, and they don't like people being put down, bullied."

He said that after reflecting on their questions, he told them, "We're not against gay people, we have lots of gay members in our church." He noted that there are priests who are gay and who live chastely. He tries to impress upon young people that the church is "not prejudiced" against gay people but does not shy away from the church's teaching on marriage.

Attitudes about L.G.B.T. issues among Catholics in the United States have changed in recent years. Catholics as a cohort are now mostly accepting of same-sex marriage and believe that businesses should not be allowed to discriminate against L.G.B.T. people in the marketplace.

The dizzying pace of progress for L.G.B.T. people has presented the church with new challenges, Bishop O'Connell said. Bishops, he said, are "struggling" with the issue and are considering "How do we really be kind?" when formulating policies about bathrooms and locker rooms in church-affiliated institutions.

Young people see the church as a scold, the bishop said, and he urged pastors to act like good parents when confronted with parishioners who are unsure about their gender or sexuality. If a child told a mom or dad that she or he is struggling with sexual identity, "a good parent would take that as a real cry for a conversation and not just say, 'Stop it,'" he said.

In other listening sessions Bishop O'Connell has hosted, he said, there are usually two types of participants: "people confused because the church has too many rules" and "people confused because the church 'took away' all of our rules."

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

When an auxiliary bishop in the Archdiocese of Boston asked the nearly 200 students in a high school confirmation class what questions they had for him in January, two themes quickly emerged. First, they wrote him, why did you want to become a bishop? Second, why does the church hate gay people?

The first one was easy, Bishop Mark O'Connell told them, since very few priests set out to become bishops.

But the second question, which he said comes up frequently when he meets with young people, was more difficult for him to answer—not because church teaching is unclear to him, but because the language the church often uses fails to resonate with a generation that increasingly sees kindness as the highest virtue. An experience he had with a student following the listening session last month led him to post a message on Twitter to encourage other bishops to listen to the concerns young Catholics have about fraught issues of gender and sexuality.

"I feel inspired by Pope Francis to find new language to express the beauty of our truth," Bishop O'Connell told **America** in a recent interview. To that end, the bishop, who also serves as pastor of a parish with 2,800 families, has held 22 listening sessions.

A canon lawyer by training, Bishop O'Connell said during an address at his ordination as bishop last August that church leaders are called to reach out to the "many who feel the church doesn't want them." He said part of

# In Honduras, eco-activists killed as demonstrators resist Hernández inauguration

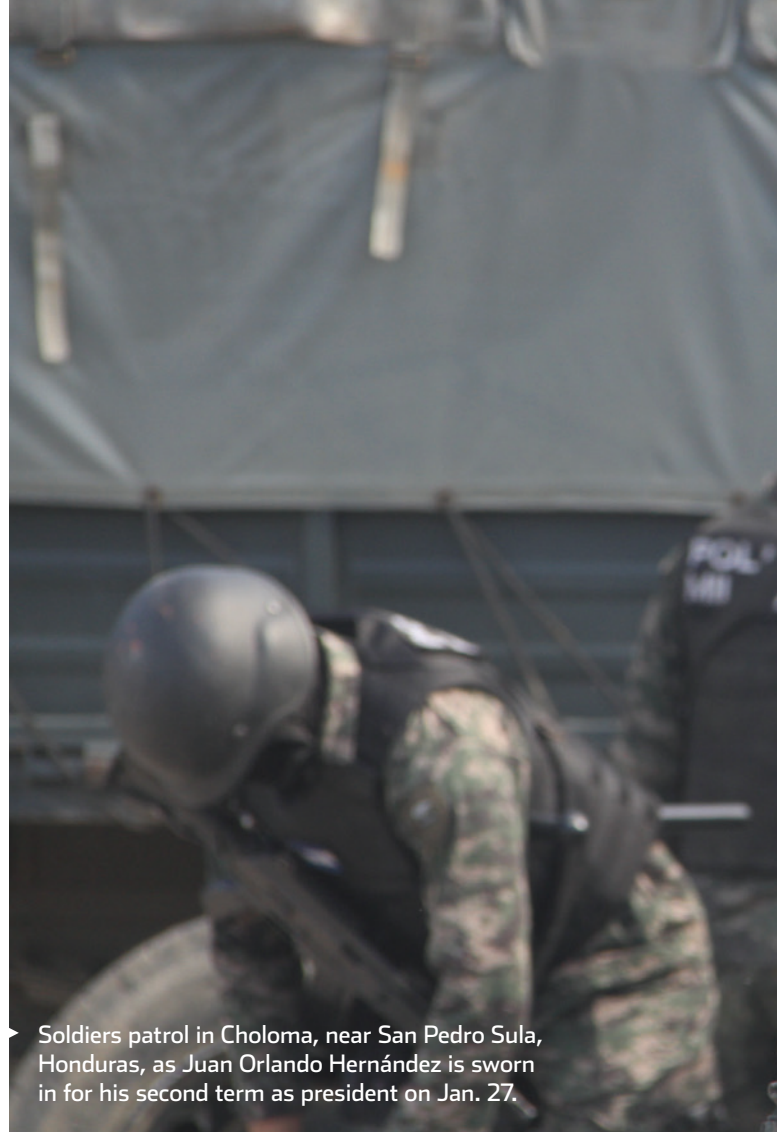
Police and protesters fought running battles in the narrow streets of Tegucigalpa on Jan. 27. But in the end, Honduran security forces were able to hold back demonstrators who sought to press closer to the National Stadium, where Juan Orlando Hernández was being sworn in for his second term as president.

Details of the inauguration were kept from the public, and though more than 20 nations—including the United States—have recognized the new president, none of the usual foreign heads of state were present for the ceremony. An election in November marred by irregularities, allegations of fraud and conveniently timed computer breakdowns at the Supreme Electoral Tribunal may have been the reason for the low profile.

More than 30 demonstrators have been killed since the contested elections were held in November, and on Jan. 22 and 23 two environmental activists were allegedly killed by police in the northern Honduran department of Atlántida, one of them pulled from his home in the dead of night before being riddled with bullets.

Despite these acts of apparently state-sponsored violence, some still felt compelled to make their voices heard against the Hernández government. In the city of El Progreso in northern Honduras, Ismael Moreno, S.J., known affectionately here as Padre Melo, celebrated Mass before leading his community out into the street, surrounded by fellow Jesuits from around the Americas and an interreligious group from the United States. That delegation had been assembled in January by Share El Salvador, the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas' Justice Team and others in a hurried show of solidarity with the Honduran priest.

Padre Melo has continued to protest the president's second term, denouncing it as the outcome of election fraud and contrary to the nation's Constitution. In recent weeks pamphlets began circulating condemning Padre Melo and his supporters as people intent on "setting Honduras on fire." The flyers unpleasantly paralleled threats against other priests in the region in the recent past.



Soldiers patrol in Choloma, near San Pedro Sula, Honduras, as Juan Orlando Hernández is sworn in for his second term as president on Jan. 27.

Jose Artiga of Share El Salvador was in the delegation marching with the residents of El Progreso. "We remembered what happened in El Salvador," he said. "When people were named like that; they appeared dead next."

On the streets in Choloma and San Pedro Sula on the morning of the inauguration, small groups of protesters assembled and were alternately cheered and jeered by passersby. That evening more than 10,000 people marched through San Pedro Sula's streets.

One man maintained a lonely protest alongside the highway leading to Choloma, positioned between two police squads. He insisted he was not afraid. "We have to defeat fear or we can never overcome this government," he said. With all confidence in the electoral process taken from Honduras, "to protest is the only right we have left."

Noting the presence of a reporter from the United States, he added, "I'm glad you are here; you have to explain what is happening in Honduras."

As he spoke, a carload of young men approached, shouting their support. He watched them pass by. "It would





Kevin Clarke/America

be better if people stopped and joined us,” he said. He gestured to the streets filled with pedestrians, delivery and industrial truck drivers and motorists going about their business as if it were a normal Saturday morning. “You’ll see all this and you will think everything is fine in my country,” he said. “But that is not the truth; the truth is we have a murderous government in Honduras now.”

Over the preceding hour, several police cars had slowed and taken his picture. He does not know if those were just minor acts of intimidation or if they might truly mean security forces will one day come for him. “But I want you to know, if something happens to me, it will be the government of Juan Hernández that is responsible,” he said.

---

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

## China’s Christians face new restrictions as religious code is revised

---

In this image taken from video shot on Jan. 9, people in hard hats stand amid the remains of the Golden Lampstand Church in Linfen in northern China’s Shanxi province.



China Aid via AP

Chinese military police detonated explosives to bring down the Golden Lampstand Church, a non-state-affiliated church in the northern province of Shanxi, on Jan. 9, according to China Aid, a Texas-based Christian advocacy group.

The destruction of the church and the Dec. 27 demolition of a Catholic village church in Huyi, in the Shaanxi province, are feared by many Christians as signs of a nationwide drive to tighten state control over church life in China.

The state-run newspaper Global Times said that the gigantic Golden Lampstand Church was “secretly built” in violation of building codes and was demolished as part of a citywide campaign “to remove illegal buildings.” Many Chinese Christians connect the demolition of the two churches to a revised set of “Regulations on Religious Affairs.”

Xu Yonghai, the leader of an unregistered “house” church in Beijing, said he is bracing for more state harassment.

“The room for religious belief is definitely narrowing. We Christians have to be prepared to follow in our predecessors’ footsteps of the 1950s,” Mr. Xu said, alluding to persecution of Chinese Christians in the Mao era.

Under the new regulations, lower-level officials can oversee the activities of China’s religious communities—a move expected to lead to intensified harassment of Christians and churches—and large fines can be imposed on unsanctioned activities.

Professor Ying Fuk Tsang, director of the divinity school at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, said the government is bolstering its control of religious activities because it regards the growth of Christianity in China as “too fast and too heated.”

---

Verna Yu, *Hong Kong correspondent.*

# WAITING FOR MORNING

By John W. Miller




IN *A West Virginia town  
looks for a new start in  
Trump's America*

# MOUNDSVILLE

Moundsville, while in decline, has never been an example of the opioid-riddled hell Mr. Trump painted in his inauguration address.

Photo composite: John W. Miller / iStock



# SINCE 1980, MOUNDSVILLE HAS LOST AN ESTIMATED 7,720 JOBS.

No matter what time of day it is, Phil Remke, the ebullient vice mayor of this West Virginia river town of 8,700, salutes every constituent the same way: “Top of the morning to ya.”

It is still early enough in Trump’s America for supporters like Mr. Remke to hope that the president can carry more of the fantasies he spun into triumph, and late enough to get a sense of what is actually happening.

For Mr. Remke, a burly 64-year-old lifelong resident of Moundsville, W.Va., father of three, husband, churchgoer, businessman and politician, Mr. Trump remains a godsend. “He’s a businessman, like me,” he says. “I just wish the media would leave him alone, because what he’s doing is working.”

Moundsville’s mythology of a mighty economic past rings so true that it is obvious why Donald J. Trump, and his special brand of nostalgia, crushed Hillary Clinton on election night in Marshall County, 73 percent to 22 percent. And President Trump, says Mr. Remke, is validating his vote. “Look at the stock market since the election,” he says. “He’s all about business.”

The question for Mr. Remke, Moundsville and thousands of other small American towns dreaming of a better life under Mr. Trump, is what kind of business. Moundsville, while in decline, has never matched the picture of an opioid-riddled rusting hell that Mr. Trump painted in his inauguration tirade about “American carnage.” There is life here. Things work. Unemployment in the county is a palatable 5.7 percent.

But a year into the Trump era, town leaders are facing the truth that, even with Mr. Trump’s pro-business policies, they will never be able to turn back the clock to a community built on stable, lucrative factory jobs. Instead, their fight is making sense of the economy they have and how it is upending people’s social, cultural and spiritual lives.

That reality is a less stable and smaller economy based on the three pillars of energy, services and tourism. The Moundsville area has a coal mine, gas wells, a Walmart, a prison, a hospital and two tourist attractions—a former state penitentiary and the Native American burial mound for which the town is named.

Job offerings at those places are a tough sell to many young people with skill and ambition. “At some point, they started leaving, or going into the military,” says Stan Stewart, a former school administrator and teacher.

With fewer skills in the workforce, companies hesitate to invest in manufacturing plants and instead create service jobs that require minimal job training and skills. Many workers are transient, which makes it harder to maintain social clubs and church communities. Newspaper readership in the United States is in decline; there is less shared knowledge, creating openings for divisive politicians.

## **A City of Commerce**

The roots of commerce run deep here. Moundsville, nestled along the Ohio River between Pittsburgh and Cincinnati, is named for a 60-foot high burial mound built by the Adena, a prehistoric people that roamed the Ohio Valley 2,500 years



Photos: John W. Miller

The Moundsville area has two tourist attractions—a former state penitentiary and a Native American burial mound for which the town is named.

ago. Archeological digs suggest they imported marine shells from the Gulf Coast, copper from the Upper Midwest and flint to make spears from all around Appalachia.

In the 19th and 20th centuries, ease of access to lumber, coal, limestone, clay and other raw materials boosted new businesses catering to the rich markets of a booming young country. The list of things once made here is eye-popping: steel, aluminum, shoes, brooms, whips for buggies, bricks, cookware, glass, pottery, guns, clothes, fencing. Even airplanes. After the Fokker Aircraft plant closed, Louis Marx and Company in the 1930s turned it into the world's largest toy factory. There were so many jobs here that old-timers like to say you could get laid off at the steel mill on a Monday and get hired at the toy factory on a Tuesday.

Then, starting in the late 1970s, it all came crashing down. Families got tired of running their shops and factories, or they could not compete against the chains moving in. Markets dried up or became saturated. Foreign competitors made goods more cheaply and gained access to U.S. markets by new trade deals. Since 1980, Moundsville has lost an estimated 7,720 jobs, according to the local Chamber of Commerce.

Catherine Frame, a retired middle school teacher, watched her three children leave. One is an artist in Kansas City, one an F.B.I. agent in eastern West Virginia, and one works in technology in California. "If you go to Kansas City for art, or California for high-tech, you might be the same person, but you're going to lose your community roots," she says.



For Phil Remke, the vice mayor, Trump remains a godsend: "He's a businessman, like me."

As in other small towns, it was hard in Moundsville not to feel betrayed by company managers in Pittsburgh, bankers in New York and politicians in Washington.

Then came Donald J. Trump, pitching a message of economic restoration.

His vows to bring back factory jobs to places like Moundsville were mostly unrealistic, say economists and business leaders. "Places like that just don't have a comparative advantage in making stuff anymore," says Ken Troske, a professor of economics at the University of Kentucky. "Often, the right economic thing to do is for young people with skills to leave and find the jobs they want in bigger cities."

Ironically, that often leaves behind a labor shortage. There is one manufacturing plant left in the Moundsville area, a plant that makes caps for jars of cosmetics, pickles



# COAL IS NOT THE EMPLOYMENT BONANZA IT USED TO BE.

and other consumer goods. Even though pay starts at \$20 an hour, “it’s a challenge to find labor right now because of the pipelines going in and people wanting to work in the gas business,” says Bob Macosko, local director of sales for Tecnocap, the Italian company that owns the plant. The cap factory has 140 jobs. The pipeline jobs are farther out of town but are pursued by locals, Mr. Macosko says.

## Coal Country

The area where Mr. Trump’s pledges are most rooted in reality is the state’s legendary tradition of mining coal, where looser regulations allow companies to cut costs and boost output. The Marshall County Mine near Moundsville is the area’s biggest employer, with 832 workers, many of whom make annual salaries of around \$80,000, says Gary Broadbent, a spokesman for Murray Energy, which owns the facility. The mine is now running at almost full production, he says.

West Virginia produced around 90 million tons of coal last year, up from 80 million in 2016, an uptick most analysts and coal leaders credit to the Trump administration. But that is down from a peak of 156 million tons in 2008, and it is not expected to increase much.

To be sure, coal is not the employment bonanza it used to be. The implementation of automatic machinery, like so-called longwall machines, led to cuts in employment, from 100,000 jobs in 1950 to 25,000 in 2008 and around 14,000 today. Mines have become much more capital intensive and high-tech, says John Deskins, an economist at West Virginia University. “Miners became

people who operated big pieces of equipment and machinery,” he says.

Coal mining in West Virginia in this decade has been challenged partly by the Obama administration’s enforcement of environmental laws, and also by the development of hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, of natural gas in the late 2000s, which ushered in an era of abundant gas production, undercutting coal by price and forcing coal-fired power plants out of business.

Drive up into the hills and hollows surrounding Moundsville and you see the glint of pipes snaking gas from wells to processing plants. Town leaders say they dream of new foreign investment and hope to build an industry that makes subsidiary products. In November President Trump signed a preliminary deal with China to invest \$83.7 billion in gas, power and chemical projects in West Virginia over 20 years, but few specifics have been released, so nobody knows if Moundsville could benefit.

There is also excited talk of a new plant that the Thailand-based company PTT has discussed building on a bluff across the river in Belmont County, Ohio. This would inject billions of dollars into the local economy and create thousands of jobs, say town leaders. PTT says it is interested in building a so-called cracker plant, which “cracks” molecules of ethane into plastic.

Despite all the hype, the cracker plant could also be just another fantasy. In an email, Dan Williamson, spokesman for PTT, writes that he must “emphasize that it is only a potential project at this stage,” although “the



Moundsville is ringed by clusters of camper vans housing “pipeliners”—workers who travel around the country for jobs in the gas industry.

company is working diligently.” The “numbers that have been shared to date,” he adds, “are that it would employ thousands of people in the construction phase and hundreds of people on a permanent basis after the plant is operational.” A “final investment decision” is due by the end of 2018, after a feasibility study, the company says.

### A Priest’s Ministry

Already, Moundsville is ringed by clusters of sleek camper vans housing “pipeliners”—engineers, maintenance men and drivers who travel around the country working in the gas industry.

Two pipeliners, Richard and Jamie Boudreaux, from Chacahoula, La., moved to Moundsville a couple of years ago. Traveling around the country, it is difficult to find community, says Jamie Boudreaux. “You don’t always get groups and churches welcoming you.” They found a community home at Moundsville’s St. Francis Church, and a friend in its leader. That is because Moundsville does have this going for it as it copes with a changing economy and community: a good priest.

Attendance at the church is down to a few hundred a week, mostly older people. They come to listen to Father That Son Ngoc Nguyen. The priest suggests turning the greying population of decaying American towns into a strength. “Young people could admire and follow how spiritual their older generation is,” he says.

The bouncy 56-year-year diocesan priest grew up in Vietnam during the war and, when he emigrated to the



Father That Son Ngoc Nguyen says people in Appalachia “feel betrayed” and that it is “up to churches to offer community.”

United States, was sponsored by a family in West Virginia. It was seeing human suffering up close during the Vietnam War that fostered his vocation, he says. Father Nguyen compares West Virginia to Vietnam. People in Appalachia “feel betrayed,” he says. “Companies moved out, and there was no infrastructure.” It was “up to churches to offer community,” he says.

Parishioners “are constantly telling me that the media should leave Trump alone so he can do his job,” says Father Nguyen. “I don’t really talk politics, I’m Vietnamese, and in a communist country we’re not used to talking about politics.”

The priest names the erosion of genuine human connection caused by technology as the main culprit in declining church attendance and subsequent decisions, like the parish closing its last Catholic school this past summer.



# LOCAL JOBS ARE A TOUGH SELL TO YOUNG PEOPLE WITH SKILL AND AMBITION.

“Jesus didn’t say you’re going to have Steve Jobs to deal with,” he says. “People are becoming impersonal.”

Ministry in places like Appalachia poses particular challenges, says William Portier, a professor of theology at the University of Dayton in Ohio. “People in those regions have a massive and growing distrust in all institutions, except for the military,” he says. “Without community, belonging to a church and taking the sacraments becomes a series of isolated, individual choices, and that makes the church more vulnerable.”

The decline in community bonds is felt most painfully by socially active residents like Andrea Keller, the cultural program coordinator at the museum next to the Adena burial mound, the town’s grandest tourist draw. The conical hill draws over 12,000 visitors a year. The museum, located in a low-slung concrete building, houses West Virginia’s state archaeological collection, including tips of 10,000-year-old spears made out of rock, and the bones of mammoths, mastodons and giant ground sloths that roamed West Virginia 10,000 years ago.

Ms. Keller says she has noticed the disintegration of community in Moundsville in the three social organizations she belongs to, including a gardening club. “It’s becoming hard to get enough people to organize anything,” she says. “And there are barely any young people left at all.”

Across the street from the mound is the hulking fortress-like prison, built in 1866 and closed in 1995. Buses full of school groups and tourists parade through its cramped

cell blocks and gawk at Old Sparky, its old electric chair.

Townpeople welcome the dollars that tourism draws in, but they worry about its volatility. “It’s not like a big factory, where you have jobs all year round,” says Susan Board, manager of the local airport. The transient nature of the new economy is jarring to a place like Moundsville, “where people lived on the land for generations, and want to really know who you are before they trust you,” she says.

Some in Moundsville say the burial mound could draw even more tourists by playing off tales of paranormal and alien influences, but Ms. Keller emphasizes the sacredness of the area. “We have to maintain our integrity,” she says. “It is a grave site.”

## **Walmart Comes to Town**

Moundsville faced another ethical commercial dilemma in the 1990s, when Walmart sought to build a store. The winning argument was that it would bring in shoppers from Ohio and Pennsylvania. On a recent Tuesday night, the parking lot was packed with people streaming in to chase bargains like boxes of spaghetti for a dollar, tomato sauce for \$1.17, and Christmas sweaters made in China for \$7.49—all lower prices, when adjusted for inflation, than they could have dreamed of a generation ago. The Walmart offers jobs for a couple of hundred people, who make \$9 an hour to start, say employees. They describe it as an easy job to get when you first get to town. Walmart did not respond to requests for comment.





There is only one manufacturing plant left in the Moundsville area.

Photo: David Bernabo



Photo: John W. Miller

At some point, people “started leaving, or going into the military,” says Stan Stewart, a former teacher.



Photo: John W. Miller

Catherine Frame, a retired middle school teacher, has watched her three children leave Moundsville.

Mr. Remke, the recently elected vice mayor intent on attracting new business, incarnates many of the trends affecting Moundsville. A lifelong resident, his dad was a retail businessman and ran a furniture and appliance store that Mr. Remke took over in 1982, and closed in 2008, partly because of the arrival of Walmart.

“At first we didn’t support them moving in, but then we realized it was coming no matter what,” he says. “It really is great you can buy anything there.”

Mr. Remke helped turn the prison into a tourist attraction after it closed in 1995. In 2008 he started a medical supplies companies he closed in 2014 because, he says, of the rising costs of Obamacare. And his son is a coal miner at the Marshall County Mine. “He’d be out of a job if it weren’t for Trump,” he says. Economists and coal companies say the assertion is partly founded. Mr. Broadbent of Murray Energy says the Trump administration “has taken several vitally important actions to protect” American coal jobs.

Mr. Remke, who wears a hat that says “FBI Jesus,” an acronym for Firm Believer in Jesus, has drifted away from the Catholicism of his youth. He now goes to church twice on Sundays, once at St. Francis and a

second time at the Vineyard, an evangelical church in Wheeling. He likes the video screens and the “updated” music. The Catholic Church, he says, “just isn’t moving with the times; it’s an older generation and they don’t want the rock and roll types.”

As for Moundsville, even Mr. Remke does not think bringing back factory jobs is a realistic goal. “Everything is too automated these days; they don’t hire enough people,” he says. Mr. Remke says a more realistic proposition is bringing in hotels that will pay well enough to force Walmart to raise wages, more gas-related projects, small businesses and high-tech firms.

His political idol, he says, is Richard Caliguiri, a mayor of Pittsburgh who in the 1980s saw the erosion of the steel industry and presided over conversations about transforming that city into something else.

“Caliguiri started the process of turning a steel town into a high-tech town,” says Mr. Remke. “I don’t see why we can’t do the same thing.”

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

The Pittsburgh warehouse of Used Church Items houses devotional items for resale.





*What a missing statue and  
a Rust Belt quest taught me  
about devotion*

By Sonja Livingston

It is hard to say exactly when the statue took leave of the church in Rochester. I did not see her when I returned a few Christmases ago, but a blizzard of statues had descended that year and she may have been hidden among them. Figures of the Holy Family abounded.

One St. Joseph looked down from the organ loft, while another kept company with the gang of Gospel writers in the narthex. Anthony of Padua was there, as were the Francises (Xavier and Assisi), and Martin de Porres—and did I only imagine Lucy with her platter of eyes?

“There aren’t usually this many,” I whispered to my husband, who had agreed to stop by my childhood church, after a candlelight service with his parents. Renamed Our Lady of the Americas a decade ago, the church on the corner of

# IT WAS UNDOUBTEDLY A CRAZY THING TO DO, DRIVING ALL OVER BUFFALO IN WINTER IN SEARCH OF A MISSING STATUE. 🍃

East Main and Prince Streets was once known as Corpus Christi, the parish I had always known. The statues cast exaggerated shadows in the candlelight. That we had just come from the cool restraint of a Presbyterian sanctuary only added to the effect.

“It’s fine,” he said, but shifted his weight and avoided the gaze of the black-cloaked Mother Cabrini standing sentry on the altar.

When we returned the following Christmas, the statuary had largely disappeared and the church looked more like it did when I was a child. This thought led me to look toward the right altar and to realize with sudden clarity that the statue of Our Lady of Grace was gone.

It is not as if the sanctuary lacked images of the Blessed Mother. Our Lady of Mount Carmel inhabited the niche where the missing statue had once reigned. Our Lady of Perpetual Help bloomed quietly in the left transept. A framed print of Our Lady of Guadalupe hung beside the lectern. They were reassuring images, beautiful images. But none of them were mine. I twisted in my pew as the recession began, scanning alcoves and corners for the blue-cloaked Virgin I remembered: her arms extended outward, but only just so. Her ivory robe tapered into a fixed column, her blue mantle did not flap. Her face was more pensive than sweet. She wore no crown, did not trample a serpent’s head nor stand upon a sliver of moon. A model of simplicity. Queen of a working-class parish. Our Lady of Prince Street.

## Mother of Mercy

As a child, I once had a tantrum after a vigil Mass and ran from my mother into an adjacent room and found myself locked in. When I finally was found, Our Lady was the face I looked to even before running home to my own mother.



Mary was the softest spot in the church—softer perhaps than anywhere at home. She held a garland of pink roses in those days, which added to her loveliness.

By the time I came of age in the late 1980s, the plastic roses had faded and gathered dust. Both statue and garland seemed woefully out of date. I left the church—both the parish on Prince Street and the faith—soon after, and while I still adored her, only the shock of her absence 20 years later reminded me how much. These days, I am struck by how lucky I was to find the church open at all. Eventually, I would make my way fully back to church—both the parish on Prince Street and the faith—and learn the reason for the surplus statues two Christmases before.

When parishes in Rochester began to merge, congregations often brought their statues with them. Parishioners from Mount Carmel or St. Francis might not be able to save their buildings, but the communities held tight to what they could. As more churches were lost, statuary accumulated. Corpus Christi’s interior changed with the influx of each new group. Longtime Corpus Christi parishioners might grumble, but how could they really object when the building in which their parents had been married and their children baptized had been spared?

Parish closures and mergers have been common throughout the Northeast and Midwest, and the causes



Statues of the Blessed Mother and other saints accumulated as parishes closed.

Photo: Sonja Livingston

are often the same. Congregations are dwindling, there are fewer priests, and there are not enough people to maintain churches and other parish sites. As factories downsized and died, and the descendants of the immigrants who had come to work in them moved away, dioceses in the former industrial hubs of upstate New York have been hit especially hard.

The northeast section of Rochester, where I grew up, was once home to 17 Catholic parishes—each with its own architecture, history and traditions. Irish and Germans were followed by Italians, Poles and, later, Eastern Europeans, African-Americans and Puerto Ricans. One at a time, churches were built and consecrated and filled. One at a time, their doors closed. Now only two parishes remain. One of these is mine.

In many ways, my church is typical. Formed in 1888, Corpus Christi began in a modest brick building used jointly as a school. The population exploded as new arrivals came to work in city factories and railroad yards and settled the areas east of the Genesee River. By 1903, the parish expanded into a larger sandstone church. Attendance peaked in the 1940s and '50s, but the flush of prosperity was followed by the postwar flight to suburbs.

By the 1960s, the parish had begun its battle to survive.

When I returned to the church, it was with a newfound appreciation for its history and the precariousness of its

survival. The name of the parish had changed. The congregation and priest had changed. I had changed. I sat there on Sundays looking toward Our Lady of Mount Carmel. With her dark features and more exuberant beauty, the new statue was better suited to the smaller but increasingly diverse congregation. Why then, did my thoughts return to the one I had looked to as a child, the figure of the Blessed Mother whose robe was the exact shade of a morning glory?

### A Search Begins

Objects become touchstones for particular places, and the statue I remembered represented not only the Blessed Virgin but the trajectory and disposition of the church in which she had stood for more than 75 years.

The Corpus Christi Mary had looked on as babies were baptized, couples married and coffins incensed and lifted from the church. She stood by as broad Irish accents gave way to the honeyed sound of Sicilian and the tender rivulets of Spanish. Candles flickered at her feet through the Great Depression and World War II, as telephone lines were installed along Prince and as buses replaced trolleys on East Main. She offered refuge as race riots erupted in nearby streets and kept watch during the long years of Vietnam. She was there as parishioners celebrated their annual bonuses and, years later, when they came to grieve the pink slips the factories doled out in their place. Our Lady

The blue-cloaked Virgin I remembered: her arms extended outward, but only just so.

of Prince Street had outlasted priests and presidents and popes. She had weathered with steadfast grace ice storms and power outages. I had to know the rest of her story.

My search was casual at first. I surveyed the church basement and checked the vestry. I spied the gentle slope of a veiled head through a window while walking to my car one Sunday and sneaked into the sacristy the following week—but it was not her.

A sensible person would have stopped there.

Instead, I quizzed the secretary during coffee hour. She did not know anything about the Corpus Christi Mary. “Check with the diocese,” she said. The person who handled the mergers at the diocese responded to my email with a photograph of a life-sized statue rising from Corpus Christi’s basement on a wheelchair lift.

“That’s her!” I wrote.

She replied that the statue had been sold to a church in Buffalo. When I asked which, she said she would get back to me. But she was either busy or had had enough of my statue talk, as I did not hear from her again. After a long wait and a reminder email, I began to wonder if there was something I had overlooked—some sensitivity about the church’s history perhaps, or the emotional work of merging churches.

It is not as unusual as people might expect, the movement of devotional items; there are places that specialize in it. I found a website for one, called Used Church Items, and

emailed to ask if I could visit their Pittsburgh warehouse. One of the proprietors, Mike Osella generously obliged.

I left the interstate south of Pittsburgh and wound past fields edged with chicory and Queen Anne’s lace and gas stations selling bait. In town, I passed an American Legion post before turning off the main strip into an area of warehouses and parked near an old building quietly succumbing to vines.

Statues gathered just inside the warehouse door, life-sized figures crowded together like concertgoers. Every imaginable saint seemed to be represented, in every imaginable form.

“St. Josephs are our biggest seller.” Mike said. Used Church Items sells to churches looking for replacement fixtures, seminarians wanting quality chalices, sisters seeking a crèche for their motherhouse. An enormous Christ the King awaited shipment to Singapore for use in a procession. Just days before my visit, a pair of A-list celebrities had toured the warehouse with an eye toward creating a private chapel. But not all their customers are formally religious. The store’s items also appear on movie sets and in television backgrounds.

Mike’s father began collecting church-related items shortly after the changes of the Second Vatican Council led to items associated with the Latin Mass falling out of favor. A Catholic and an antique dealer, Jason Osella tried to salvage pieces he recognized as valuable and finely

## AMERICA'S GUIDE TO RETREATS

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

Brought to you by **America MEDIA**  
A JESUIT MINISTRY



### **Bellarmino Jesuit Retreat House**

420 W. County Line Road, Barrington, IL 60010  
Ph: (847) 381-1261; website: [www.jesuitretreat.org](http://www.jesuitretreat.org)

Bellarmino Jesuit Retreat House is located on 80 acres of rolling meadows and wooded countryside 40 miles northwest of Chicago. Bellarmino offers silent retreats for men and women based on the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. Other offerings include day-long spirituality programs, 12-step recovery retreats and directed retreats. Learn more at [www.jesuitretreat.org](http://www.jesuitretreat.org).



### **Christ the King Retreat House and Conference Center**

500 Brookford Rd., Syracuse, NY 13224  
Ph: (315) 446-2680  
Website: [www.ckretreat.com](http://www.ckretreat.com) email [ckretreat@syrdio.org](mailto:ckretreat@syrdio.org)

Offering retreats for all. Directed retreat: July 27-29, July 15-20, July 29-Aug. 3 and October 14-19. Clergy retreat June 4-8 with Anthony Gittins, C.S. Sp., Preached Retreat with Paula D'Arcy June 22-24, Silent Preached with Fr. Anthony Ciorra, July 15-20, Brother Don Bisson, F.M.S. July 29-Aug. 3. For information: [www.ckretreat.com](http://www.ckretreat.com)



### **Ignatius House Jesuit Retreat Center**

6700 Riverside Drive, NW, Atlanta, Georgia 30328  
Ph: (404) 255-0503; email: [registrar@ignatiushouse.org](mailto:registrar@ignatiushouse.org)  
Website: [www.ignatiushouse.org](http://www.ignatiushouse.org)

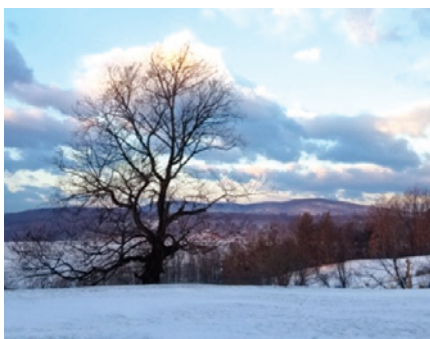
Nestled on 20 acres on the Chattahoochee River and surrounded by tranquil paths and surroundings, Ignatius House is your home to experience God's creation and the simplicity of silence. Enjoy a private room and bath, chef-prepared meals, spaces for prayer and a sacred environment. Weekend, 5-day, 8-day and individually directed retreats.



### **Jesuit Spiritual Center at Milford**

5361 South Milford Road, Milford, OH 45150  
Ph: (513) 248-3500; email: [reservations@jesuitspiritualcenter.com](mailto:reservations@jesuitspiritualcenter.com)  
Website: [www.jesuitspiritualcenter.com](http://www.jesuitspiritualcenter.com)

Celebrating 90 years of retreat ministry, the Jesuit Spiritual Center, located outside Cincinnati, sits on 37 beautiful acres along a scenic river, providing a tranquil place for prayer and renewal. In the Ignatian tradition, six week-long personally directed retreats are offered throughout 2018, and a 30-day retreat during October.



### **Linwood Spiritual Center**

A Ministry of Society of St. Ursula  
50 Linwood Road, Rhinebeck, NY 12572-2504  
Ph: (845) 876-4178; website: [www.linwoodspiritualctr.org](http://www.linwoodspiritualctr.org)

Linwood's spacious hills overlook the majestic Hudson River in historic Rhinebeck, N.Y. Located five minutes from the Amtrak station in Rhinecliff, N.Y. Check our website, or call for listings of our programs, including private and Ignatian guided/directed retreats.





### **Loyola House Retreats & Ignatian Training**

Ignatius Jesuit Centre

5420 Highway 6 N, Guelph, ON N1H 6J2 Canada

Ph: (519) 824-1250 ext. 266; email: [registration@ignatiusguelph.ca](mailto:registration@ignatiusguelph.ca)

Website: [www.loyolahouse.com](http://www.loyolahouse.com)

A welcoming space for directed and guided retreats, the full Spiritual Exercises experience (40-day) plus training programs in spiritual direction and retreat ministry.



### **Mercy Center Burlingame**

2300 Adeline Drive, Burlingame, CA 94010

Ph: (650) 340-7474

Website: [www.mercy-center.org](http://www.mercy-center.org); email: [mc@mercywmw.org](mailto:mc@mercywmw.org)

Mercy Center Burlingame, a ministry of the Sisters of Mercy, is located on a 40-acre wooded site 15 miles south of San Francisco. Join us this summer for internationally-known contemplative teachers, prayerful community, peace and beauty. Check our complete program calendar. We look forward to welcoming you soon.



### **Montserrat Jesuit Retreat House**

600 N. Shady Shores Drive, Lake Dallas, TX 75065

Ph: (940) 321- 6020

Email: [info@montserratretreat.org](mailto:info@montserratretreat.org); website: [montserratretreat.org](http://montserratretreat.org)

Are you spiritually hungry, tired, restless? Jesus asks, “What do you want me to do for you?” Montserrat offers beautiful space to deepen your relationship with Jesus. Retreatants experience restorative peace and transformative renewal on these grounds made sacred by prayer. Tell Jesus what you want by reserving your place today.



### **Redemptorist Renewal Center**

7101 West Picture Rocks Road, Tucson, AZ 85743

Ph: (520) 744-3400; email: [office@desertrenewal.org](mailto:office@desertrenewal.org)

Website: [www.desertrenewal.org](http://www.desertrenewal.org)

For over 50 years, R.R.C. has been a sanctuary of contemplative prayer, study and practice embraced by the spirituality of the Sonoran Desert. Home to the Contemplative Study and Sabbatical Program and the Hesychia School of Spiritual Direction, R.R.C. is available for group retreats, meetings, seminars and private retreats.



### **Sacred Heart Jesuit Retreat House**

4801 North Highway 67, P.O. Box 185, Sedalia, CO 80135

Ph: (866) 930-1181 ext. 122; Ph: (303) 688-4198 ext. 122

Website: [www.sacredheartretreat.org](http://www.sacredheartretreat.org)

A Colorado oasis of peace and beauty, surrounded by spectacular natural beauty and panoramic views of the Rockies, Sacred Heart Retreat House is the perfect setting for solitude, reflection and prayer. We offer summer directed retreats as well as individual directed retreats year round. For more information, visit [www.sacredheartretreat.org](http://www.sacredheartretreat.org).



**San Alfonso Retreat House**

755 Ocean Ave., Long Branch, NJ 07740  
 Ph: (732) 222-2731 ext. 159; website: [www.sanalfonso retreats.org](http://www.sanalfonso retreats.org)  
 Facebook: [alfonso retreats](https://www.facebook.com/alfonso retreats); Twitter: [@alfonso retreats](https://twitter.com/alfonso retreats)

San Alfonso Retreat House and Conference Center, a ministry of the Redemptorist fathers and brothers, is situated on eight acres on the New Jersey coast, providing a setting of great natural beauty to meditate and pray, reflect and study, and to be still and listen.



**Siena Retreat Center**

5637 Erie Street, Racine, WI 53402  
 Ph: (262) 898-2590  
 Email: [retreats@racinedominicans.org](mailto:retreats@racinedominicans.org);  
 Website: [www.SienaRetreatCenter.org](http://www.SienaRetreatCenter.org)

On the shores of Lake Michigan between Chicago and Milwaukee, Siena Retreat Center offers private retreats, spiritual direction, space for group retreats and training programs in grief companioning and spiritual direction. Bookstore, chapel, outdoor labyrinth and library.



**Spiritual Ministry House**

4822 Del Mar Avenue, San Diego, CA 92107  
 Ph: (619) 224-9444; Fax: (619) 224-1082  
 Email: [spiritmin@rscj.org](mailto:spiritmin@rscj.org); website: [www.spiritmin.org](http://www.spiritmin.org)

Religious of the Sacred Heart offer year-round directed and private retreats, including the 30-day Spiritual Exercises and self-directed sabbaticals. We are one and one-half blocks from the ocean in comfortable townhouses with large private rooms and baths. Our silent house in naturally beautiful environs invites relaxation and prayer.

JOIN THE CONVERSATION IN 2018  
 ADVERTISE WITHIN AMERICA DIRECTORIES

- ▶ Retreats
- ▶ Health Services
- ▶ Liturgical
- ▶ Publishing
- ▶ Social Causes
- ▶ Wedding Suppliers
- ▶ Financial Services
- ▶ Bereavement
- ▶ Gifts

**NEW** VISIT THE AMERICA  
 CLASSIFIED-MARKETPLACE

Bring us your retreats, books, job postings and all missions!  
 We will support all we can.  
<https://marketplace.americamagazine.org>

CONTACT

**Ken Arko**  
 Director of Advertising Services  
 (212) 515-0126  
[karko@americamedia.org](mailto:karko@americamedia.org)



Images of Mary, like this one of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, vary as much as churches themselves.

I suppose. In an era of closed churches, things pile up. Remaining parishes can absorb only so much.

But we humans get attached. Against all reason and logic, devotion becomes entwined with the spaces in which it is enacted and the objects that help inspire and focus it. Our places and people come and go so quickly, we want to hold on to what remains. Whether it is a mother's ring or a grandfather's desk—even an old plaster statue—such things come to matter more when so little of the past seems salvageable.

I scanned the warehouse again. It was rife with statues of the Blessed Mother. Though I knew better, I checked each of their faces to see if she was mine. Of course, she was not there. I was not likely to find her, I knew, but for reasons I did not fully understand, I needed to keep trying.

### The Search Continues

I started driving to churches in Rochester on the weekends last November. I planned to spend a week in Buffalo in mid-December, but I knew I would not be able to visit most of the churches. Even after all the closings a decade ago, spires and domes continue to elevate and define the skyline. The churches sit like jewel boxes in working-class neighborhoods, their towers soaring above pizza places and bowling alleys. In Western New York, the church is often the loveliest building in the neighborhood. As kids, we walked by the neighborhood bar, a fish market and several bodegas to get there. I went because I loved the Mass, but also because it was the most glorious place I knew—and ours was a rather ordinary church.

If I had grown up near St. Louis Church in Buffalo, someone would have had to pry me from the pew. A sumptuous reservoir of gilded mosaics and high-flung arches, it has enormous panels of stained glass that transform the anemic winter sun into an array of color and light. But St. Louis is not alone. What is perhaps more astounding than its beauty is how many others are just as mind-blowingly dazzling. St. Mary in Medina. Holy Family in Albion. St. Michael in Rochester. Even run-of-the-mill city churches often feature exquisitely carved altars, handcrafted tabernacles and fonts, rose windows and celestial murals—and in every one, a place of honor for the Blessed Mother.

Images of Mary vary as much as the churches themselves. Our Lady of Czestochowa is popular in Polish parishes, while the Madonna della Libera can be found at Roches-


*Continued from Page 30*

wrought. He bought what he could and stored pieces wherever he could, which meant statues often occupied space in their home. “It must have been fun to bring friends over,” I joked, and Mike laughed. “Actually, it was.”

Statues are the tip of the iceberg. Shelves teem with censers and sacristy bells. A vestment room houses brocaded chasubles and gilded stoles. The second floor is loaded with sets of chandeliers and Stations of the Cross. There are baptismal fonts and kneelers, canopies and paintings, pulpits and croziers, altar crosses and panels of stained glass.

Downstairs, a room of glass cases is filled with gold-plated vessels. Shelves glow with the sheen of polished chalices. Monstrances gleam like a hundred suns. I spun around when I went inside, giddy and stunned. The room leaked so much light, all of Pennsylvania seemed to shine.

The Osellas were generous with their time, especially since, despite my attempts to explain, none of us quite understood why I had come. “I’m interested in what happens to devotional items when churches close,” I had written in my email. But not everything ends up in a warehouse to be repaired and readied for resale. Some objects are transferred locally. Others are sold to outside dioceses, parishioners and the general public. Still others remain tucked away in closets and vestries, are melted down or discarded. It makes sense,



After a multi-city search, the author located this statue of Our Lady of Grace, from the former Corpus Christi parish in Rochester, N.Y.

Photo: Sonja Livingston

ter's St. Anthony of Padua, where Masses are still celebrated in Italian. A 1,600-pound Our Lady of Victory, made from marble, rises from the main altar of a lavish basilica in the city of Lackawanna, outside Buffalo, while a simply carved Our Lady of Hope complements the vibrant parish of the same name on the West Side of Buffalo. Inspired by a 1950s apparition, the statue at the Seneca Street Shrine in Buffalo is a mid-century vision in her belted day dress.

Besides checking older city parishes, I searched newly formed parishes and suburban sites that might have added a chapel. I attended concerts and holiday programs at night, but relied on daily Mass for my visits. I would rise for a 7 a.m. service in one church, followed by an 8:15 Mass at another, and later one at 12:05 p.m. I would slip in and out as I was able, lighting a candle and sitting a minute. I came close to thinking I had found my Mary at St. Katharine Drexel, whose Virgin Mary's sky-blue cloak was so similar; I had to look several times to be sure.

It was undoubtedly a crazy thing to do, driving all over Western New York in winter in search of a missing statue. I slid along roads during the day, and tossed and turned at night, doubting myself and questioning my use of time and resources. But I also loved it.

The churches were gorgeous, each with its own flavor and history. When else would I have an excuse to visit so many? How much longer would they be there for me to see? Still, by week's end I was no closer to finding her.

I would have liked to post "Missing Statue" signs on utility poles throughout the city. Instead I posted on Facebook. I uploaded photos and asked friends to ask friends

if they had seen her. The Diocese of Buffalo kindly shared my post on their page. People were friendly, but the efforts proved fruitless. "What now?" I wondered, and began to email churches a few days before Christmas, sending out lost-statue missives during the busiest time of the year.

I took one last peek at a Buffalo church. St. Joseph Cathedral has its own Marys, and I did not really think my Rochester statue would be there, but I would pass the church on my way to the Thruway anyway, so I angled my car into a half-plowed spot and strode into the nave. I rushed past St. Anthony and the stations to a statue of a female saint.

Thérèse of Lisieux. The crucifix and roses gave her away. I prepared to push on and realized I was frowning. At the image of a beloved saint. I stopped and looked around. Freshly cut evergreen trees had been piled just inside the doors, 30 or so Christmas trees awaiting placement on the altar. The cathedral was filled with the scent of a pine forest. I breathed in and remembered where I was.

Look what you almost missed, I said to myself. It's time to move on.

### What I Found

My newfound wisdom lasted about an hour. Back in Rochester, I received an email from Assumption Church:

"The Buffalo Religious Arts Center has many religious statues and artifacts from closed churches. I hope you find her," Rosemary from Assumption's office wrote. "I'm all about Our Lady!"

The Buffalo Religious Arts Center is well stocked with Marys, including its founder, Mary Holland. After reading of

the impending closing of 70 Buffalo churches back in 2007, Ms. Holland began to visit them, admiring the architecture and murals and panels of stained glass, wondering what would become of them. Not content to simply wonder, she bought one of them (St. Francis Xavier in the Black Rock neighborhood) and transformed it into a space to preserve and showcase sacred objects from closed churches in Western New York.

She has collected stained glass and statues, but also architectural drawings and old photographs, and prayer books in the many languages once spoken in Black Rock. Each object tells the story of people who sacrificed everything to build the grandest buildings they could imagine—sacred spaces in which to celebrate, to give thanks and to pray for better days. When those places folded—when their children and grandchildren left and the buildings were wrecked or repurposed or sold—the paintings and statues and candlesticks required another sanctuary. In Buffalo, thanks to Mary Holland, they have one.

This was a woman who would understand my quest, I thought. When I called to arrange a visit, I told her about my search. “I want to see what you’ve done,” I said. “But my Mary is from Rochester and I don’t expect to find her there.”

“I have some pieces from Rochester,” she said. “From Corpus Christi Church.”

“Corpus Christi? In Rochester?” I wasn’t sure I had heard, with all the blood rushing into my ears.

“Yes,” she said. “There’s an Our Lady of Lourdes, and a Bernadette with a little plaid coat.”

“Mine is an Our Lady of Grace, with a blue cloak.”

“Yes,” she said, as if it sounded familiar, but she went on to describe a crowned Virgin standing on a globe.

“Oh.” My heart fell back into its socket. “Mine has no crown or globe.”

I remembered the glut of statues at the church a few years ago. She could have a boatload of Rochester Marys and still not have mine. But there was a chance, at least. I wanted to hop in my car and drive to Buffalo right then, but the region had been pummeled with winter storms. I settled on the end of the week, and hoped the snow would slow down by then.

As soon as I entered the Arts Center, my eye went to a smattering of statues near the door—St. Agnes with her lamb, the Sacred Heart of Jesus, a wood-carved St. Lucy and, to the right of the altar, a robe so blue I knew immediately it was her.

“That’s her,” I said, and though I have spent most of my life trying not to get attached to things that can be lost, I had to push back tears as I walked toward her. My husband, who

had come along, touched my shoulder. “It’s her,” I said again. She had no crown or globe, but how lovely she was. Far lovelier than I even remembered. Lovelier, in that moment, than any image of the Blessed Mother I had ever seen.

I will not soon forget the thrill of finding an object from a church and a community that once meant the world to me, and were essentially gone. It was a tangible connection to that past. That said, as much as she represented, I had no desire to try to bring her home. I realized that, throughout my journey, over and over she had been with me. All those magnificent sanctuaries. All those finely crafted objects. The beautiful liturgies. And, of course, the kind people who had cared enough to help me on my journey.

As someone who grew up in a neighborhood where the church was a rare beacon of beauty and light, I cannot say enough about the importance of such spaces. I want to believe we will safeguard such places in our own cities, and perhaps even heat them with the warmth of our bodies from time to time.

But we will sometimes lose them, too. We will not be able to save every item consecrated by history. We will occasionally lose objects that have developed a rich patina of meaning from all the prayers sent in their direction over the years. In finding Mary, I realized that our devotion to those spaces is less important than the devotion we show to each other and to God. Our capacity to come together to celebrate, to give thanks and to pray for better days—that is what all those men and women who risked everything to come and build anew have left us. That is our true inheritance. That which does not depend on marble or sandstone or panels of richly hued glass. The one thing that can never be lost.

Which is to say that while I will continue to revel in the perfect memory of Mary’s blue mantle and will support the Art Center’s good work and undoubtedly visit her again, on Sunday I will return to the church on East Main and Prince Streets. The pews will not be crowded. The faces I once loved will have mostly disappeared. I may feel, at some point, like turning around and walking out the doors. Instead, I will sing a psalm and stand with others for Communion. Instead, I will approach the right side altar, stand before Our Lady of Mount Carmel, bring a match to a candle and make a little light right there.

---

*Sonja Livingston is the author of several books of literary nonfiction, including the award-winning memoir *Ghostbread*. She divides her time between Rochester, N.Y., and Richmond, Va., where she is an assistant professor of writing at Virginia Commonwealth University.*

# WRONG TURNS

*Why travel if you are not  
going to get a little lost?*

By Anthony R. Lusvardi



Photo by Juenfro Photography on Unsplash

I realize I am in Champaign, and I want to be in Bloomington. I am without cellphone or GPS, so I resort to the navigation techniques of a distant age: I stop and ask for directions.

The two guys behind the counter at the gas station are both typing on their smartphones. “Hi,” I say, “Could you tell me what’s the best way to get to I-39?” One of them scurries off to fiddle with the little greenhouse that keeps the hot dogs warm. The other looks up and says, “What’s that?”

“I-39,” I say again. He looks confused. Since I am the one who is lost, I try to avoid any hint of condescension or bewilderment. “It’s, uh, an interstate highway.” He still has no idea but checks his phone. To be fair, I-39 turns out to be a full 60 miles away. I try to maintain an expression that says, “Oh, I’m not that lost—maybe just confused I-72 with I-74 a little.” They’re only one digit apart.

A black man with hints of gray in his scruffy beard approaches the counter with a large bottle of carbonated high-fructose corn syrup as the clerk holds his phone at different angles and tries to translate the rotating map into directions. The newcomer knows where I-39 is. In fact, he seems

excited by the novelty of the situation and takes me outside so he can literally point me in the right direction.

“You want the exit for Peoria,” he says with enthusiasm. He is wearing baggy shorts and a T-shirt, and he has the manner of somebody’s favorite uncle, one of those gregarious good souls who genuinely like to help people.

I repeat his directions back. “You got it,” he encourages me and then adds, “Hey, man, you don’t have a GPS or cellphone or something?”

“I’m living in Europe and visiting for the summer,” I say, a little embarrassed. But he is delighted. “Didn’t think I’d meet somebody from a different country!” he exclaims, shaking his head. I don’t explain that I am really only studying in Europe but am from no place more exotic than Minnesota. He heads for a beat-up minivan, then realizes he forgot his pop—yes, in Minnesota, it is pop—on the counter inside. We laugh and wave goodbye.

I have an extra 60 miles of cornfields to reflect on the encounter, and it makes me smile. I am glad to have confused my midsized central Illinois cities. Why travel if you are not going to get a little lost?





# It is the inefficiencies of the journey, as much as the sights at the destination, that give travel its depth. ●●

...

I have loved to travel since I made a bargain with my dad in high school—I would learn Italian if he took me to visit his cousins in Italy. A shrewd deal for both of us. Later I spent two years in the Peace Corps in Kazakhstan; later still, as part of my Jesuit formation, I managed to get from St. Paul, Minn., to the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City with \$35, a Greyhound bus ticket and the earnestness of a novice.

Now, a full decade later, I find myself on the road and in the air more often than I have been for years. I have just been ordained in Milwaukee—something that cannot happen over Skype—then it was back to Rome for exams, then back again to the States to visit all the people and places that have been important to me on the long journey of Jesuit formation. Illinois, where my brother and grandmother live, is the summer’s homestretch.

In between, I managed a trip to Burkina Faso and Ivory Coast for the ordination of two West African Jesuit friends. There—at that inevitable moment a week into the trip when the most urgent question in life suddenly becomes “Where did I pack the Imodium?”—I had occasion to ask myself: “Do I really still like traveling? Is it worth it?” Since I was not going anywhere for the next couple of days while the Ivorian fauna worked its way through my digestive tract, I had plenty of time to think about the question.

And, of course, that time to think was itself an answer. It is the inefficiencies of the journey, as much as the sights at the destination, that give travel its depth. My favorite moment in Africa came the evening after my friend’s ordination in Dedougou (Burkina Faso’s answer to Milwaukee). After the post-celebration lunch, we spent the afternoon on earth roads—with potholes cunning enough to swallow your car when filled with water—that wound through a landscape of eucalyptus trees, herds of goats and swine and farms still cultivated by hand, where sorghum and rice are stored in squat brick cylinders with pointy thatched roofs.

Covered in the red dust of the journey, we finally arrived in a village where the prospects of a shower were murky and air conditioning was just a cruel memory. But we had no exams to prepare for, no commitments until the morning and Burkinabe beer and the stars to entertain us. My friend mused about the values of village life. “Here people listen to their grandmothers,” he said. It was the best night of the trip.

The displacement of travel gives us the freedom to muse. The road requires a certain asceticism, however, to have that effect. In Rome, I am constantly bumping into tourists texting their latest selfie to another time zone. I do not notice them, and they do not notice me. Travel without pauses is like a musical piece with the notes crammed breathlessly together, like poetry without meter, form or punctuation. It is the spaces in between—watching the planes take off at the airport, swatting mosquitoes in the village, driving through long stretches of Midwestern farmland—where ideas can simmer without deadline. Something similar happens when praying the rosary or in the liturgy. The repetitions and silences give God the space to speak.

Of course, airport chairs are uncomfortable, unanticipated delays are boring, and Iowa really does go on forever. But if there is not a little discomfort, you probably have not left home. It is not an accident St. Ignatius Loyola instructed that his novices be tested by pilgrimage. If anyone appreciated the value of discomfort to stretch, humble and change us, it was Ignatius.

So I reach again for the Imodium; I sew a button back on my only pair of clean pants with dental floss; I bumble to communicate in a language not my own. I stop and ask for directions. And I laugh because I have driven 60 miles in the wrong direction, but the sign ahead says Peoria.

---

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





## **The George W. Hunt, S.J., Prize for Excellence in Journalism, Arts & Letters**

seeks to recognize the best of Roman Catholic literary intelligence and imagination in a variety of genres and to support the intellectual formation, artistic innovation and civic involvement of young writers.

---

**The 2018 Hunt Prize will be awarded in the  
category of Cultural & Historical Criticism.**

The winner of the Hunt Prize will:

- ▶ Receive a \$25,000 monetary award
  - ▶ Deliver an original lecture
  - ▶ Be published as the cover story in *America* magazine
- 

Nominations are open from January 22 to March 31, 2018.  
Visit **[www.huntprize.org](http://www.huntprize.org)** for more information

---

# THE ROAD OF LIFE IN SPAIN



Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela, Spain.

By Raymond A. Schroth

Tuesday, Oct. 3, was our first walk, a 10-mile, six-hour march with a band of 23 women and men, including two families from Singapore plus a mix of pilgrims from Ohio, Tennessee and Georgia, all welcomed by the New York Times writer Dan Barry and three professional Spanish guides.

A pilgrimage on the Camino de Santiago has historically been many things, including, in the Middle Ages, a penance for one's sins. Last year, 277,915 athletes, bikers, families and friends made the Way of St. James a challenge, vacation or spiritual experience.

Our trip might be seen as an individual's battle between his or her personal limitations and the 10- to 16-mile treks up and down the rocky hills of the Spanish countryside. The rolling mountains are often beautiful—from the oak and beech tree forests bordering the trails to the open grazing fields where sheep, goats, rams, cattle and even horses unknowingly bulk themselves up for the slaughterhouses. In each charming little town, the houses are white, the roofs are red and the streets are empty. The younger generation has fled to the cities, and the endless stream of pilgrims tramps through the narrow streets.

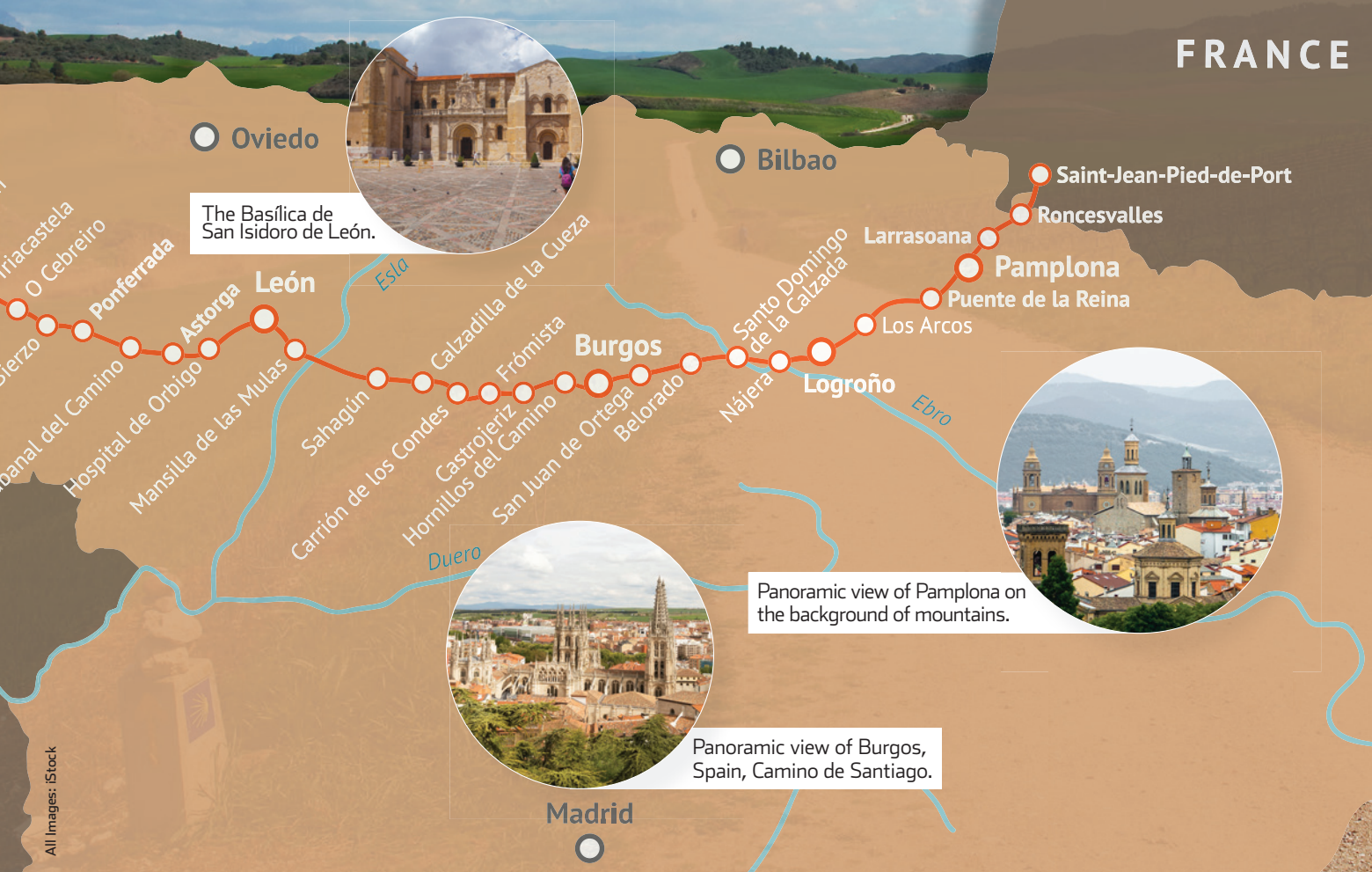
We started off in northern Spain, strolling the boardwalk of San Sebastián, then slipped into France at St.-Jean-Pied-

de-Port, a beautiful, hilly old city with architecture that transports you to the 14th century. By the third day we were back in Spain checking out Ernest Hemingway's pub and the starting line for the running of the bulls in Pamplona. For me, the traveling Jesuit, it is notable as the place where the young soldier Iñigo Loyola had his leg broken by a cannonball.

Why are we here? We are learning more about one another and ourselves with every passing day, listening to one another talk about everything from our own families to how countries and parts of countries are drawing away from one another. The average age of the group is in the early 50s; two of us are over the mid-70 mark—including a Catholic priest old enough to be the father or grandfather of everyone else.

One morning early in the trip, our group asked me to say Mass. Although I had no Bible, no Missal and no vestments, I made an outline summarizing the key prayers and preached a few words about the Good Samaritan.

Halfway through our march, hiking takes on a rhythm of its own, as the click-click-clack-clack of our walking poles sets a beat with our feet. I have been accustomed to fast walking in Manhattan, acting as if each man or woman ahead of me is an obstacle to progress. But here I slowly slip behind, joined only by a director whose job it



The *Basilica de San Isidoro de León*.

Panoramic view of Pamplona on the background of mountains.

Panoramic view of Burgos, Spain, Camino de Santiago.

is to subtly make sure I am all right.

We have admired San Sebastián, Burgos, Pamplona, León and Astorga. We noticed the transformation from the medieval confession box, adapted to update the priest-penitent relationship. In one cubicle, the priest kept a stack of books to read while he waited for a penitent. In another, the exterior was the same, but the priest sat in the middle between two chairs with no barrier and faced the sinner sitting across from him. Finally, we saw five traditional confession boxes against the wall with their upper doors open, each priest looking outward, self-consciously smiling at the tourists who swept past.

Our bus dropped us off for a two-mile walk from the woods to Santiago de Compostela Cathedral, the reputed burial place of St. James. This was what we had come for, and we were not to be disappointed. Like others along the way, the town was celebrating a festival honoring its patron saint with street crowds, marching bands in red shirts, and bagpipe and drum clubs roaring away with melodies that sounded like football fight songs and Broadway tunes. Huge lights designed as seashells, the symbol of the pilgrimage, dangled over the narrow streets. They signified for us that we were gradually realizing how much we loved one another, no

matter where we were from or what we did with our lives.

On our last evening the cathedral offered a crowning experience. We sat on the side facing the altar, determined to witness something spectacular we had heard about but never seen—the flying censer.

The organ roared, and the celebrant and six concelebrants filed in with the cantor and six men in blazing red gowns. The sermon went 10 minutes, nearly everyone went to Communion, and then we sat patiently waiting. The men in red took their places, five holding the ends of huge ropes extending to the ceiling and connected to a huge glistening gold thurible, known as the *Botafumeiro*, which they lowered, fueled and lit, then hoisted to about 50 feet above the altar steps.

At the organ's note, the censer began to swing back and forth, then farther out, and farther out again, until there it was, swooping down like a fighter plane in a dive, swooping out over and behind us, then sailing down and back, just missing the altar rail. Slowly, its work done, it came to rest.

Our 11-day tour having ended as well, we rested and, touched with grace, hugged one another and came home.

Raymond A. Schroth, S.J., is an editor emeritus of *America*.

# ‘Lent May Once Again Don Its Public Mask’

## *The editors on an American season of penance*

In 1978, writing in the wake of the Second Vatican Council, the editors of this review asked what relevance Lent had for Americans, both Catholic and not. Lenten observances and practices had fallen out of favor among many Catholics, perhaps out of embarrassment over “some of the excessive rigidity and legalism of the past,” the editors speculated. It was a pity, they wrote, because other sectors of American society were increasingly open to asceticism and self-reflection. The Christian Lenten witness was missing out on an ear friendly to the good news.

In 2018, Catholics in the United States face another shift in the culture, prompted by a sharp rise in secularism and disaffiliation with organized religion. But if the rise of Dry January (abstaining from alcohol for the month), juice cleanses and religiously held CrossFit schedules are indications of cultural loyalties, then perhaps prayer, fasting and almsgiving will find rich soil upon which to plant a message of reconciliation.

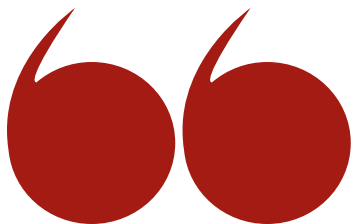
Has Lent become a dusty term, without much meaning for life in the United States in 1978? Sometimes it can seem so. Those recurrent novels of nostalgia written by professional ex-Catholics seem to take relish in caricaturing the season as a time of excessive guilt and quaint penitential practices: ashes on the forehead, fish on Friday, crowded churches for novenas and the men’s mission, lots of cheese sandwiches and hard-boiled eggs for lunch. The caricature is unfair, of course, but it may be true that even among some Catholics Lent has become less fashionable than it was in the past. If so, then not only are Catholics the poorer for neglecting a profound theme of Christian experience, but an important message for American society in general will be lost just when it is most needed.

With the breakdown of the Catholic ghetto and the subsequent emphasis on pluralism, the distinctive quality of Lent as a season set apart tended to meld into the bland amalgam of the American Christian mainstream. Embarrassed by some of the excessive rigidity and legalism of the past, many Catholics abandoned the traditional practices of Lent. An overly naive identification of religion with interpersonal relations and a heady infatuation with freedom often obscured rich spiritual and liturgical traditions that had established Lent as an integral part of the Christian calendar. In the attempts to carve out a new niche for the Catholic insertion into American religious, social and

intellectual circles, Lent received short shrift. It appeared to be a part of our cultural baggage that was dispensable. A smoother entrance into the modern dialogue of secular society could be made without it.

A good argument can be made for the case that American Catholics shortchanged themselves and their contribution to American society as a result of the virtual abandonment of Lent. Ironically, just as other groups began to find value in the practice of asceticism, Catholics began to neglect it. The healthy habit of examining one’s life to pinpoint sin was too often dismissed as borderline neurotic, so psychiatrist Karl Menninger had to remind modern man that it was the denial of sin that was really very unhealthy. Litanies of the saints and other repetitive prayers were shunted aside just before mantras came into vogue.

There are now strong indications that the Catholic community is expressing a renewed interest in Lent, and this bodes well both for that community and for American society at large. The ritual symbolism of Lent—a desert experience of prayer, self-denial, self-examination and preparation for the future—finds echoes in the themes of the current religious revival. Lent also serves as a strong countercultural symbol that confronts the value system so pervasive in American life. The very fact that a large Christian community manifests deep and public interest in the season of Lent can serve as a



*The ritual symbolism of Lent—a desert experience of prayer, self-denial, self-examination and preparation for the future—finds echoes in the themes of the current religious revival. ●●*

powerful witness against what are becoming the socially acceptable American values: self-gratification, disregard for life, an obsession with the present, misuse of scarce natural resources, greed and contempt for religion. The unquestioned assumptions behind this value system need to be challenged, and Lent is a good vehicle for initiating the dialogue.

The world food crisis and the energy crisis cry out for attention, but a vast majority of Americans choose to ignore them or fail to recognize them. Popular songs and entertainment debase human dignity and propagandize the young in a demonic fashion. Those at the most fragile points on the life span—the aged and unborn—do not count for much.

Lent calls us to step out of the ordinary precisely so that we can step back into it with eyes opened and hearts renewed. The tradition has always emphasized the practical aim of Lenten self-denial: a greater openness and sensitivity to the needs of others. Lent treats the frailty of human nature seriously. We are wound-

ed and in need of healing, but we can be restored to wholeness. A rich stream of religious wisdom springs forth from this tradition, and it continues to offer fresh alternatives to cultural fixations.

Lent is, after all, the season of spring, of new life. Although its image may bear some cheerless connotations, its reality is refreshing. As American Catholics rediscover its ritual effectiveness, Lent may once again don its public mask. And American society just might take notice.

*Editorial, Feb. 11, 1978*

## Lenten Prayers for Hungry People

You can help create hope and opportunity by using and sharing with others the *2018 Lenten Prayers for Hungry People*. A 6 x 9 inch “table tent” includes scripture readings (from Year B of the Revised Common Lectionary), prayers, and actions for each of the five weeks of Lent as well as Holy Week. You may order multiple copies—free—for distribution to members of your church or community.

Lent begins with Ash Wednesday on Feb. 14, so order your free table tents today.



© HELEN SIEGL

You may order *Lenten Prayers for Hungry People* at [bread.org/lent](http://bread.org/lent) or call toll-free **800-822-7323**



**breadfortheworld**  
HAVE FAITH. END HUNGER.

425 3rd Street SW, Suite 1200  
Washington, DC 20024  
[bread.org](http://bread.org)

XATB-AM



# *Cowboy, Engineer, Saint: On the Trail of José Brochero*

By Catherine Addington



José Brochero set out to be a pastor and in the process became a public servant par excellence.

It was the highways that drew me to Villa Cura Brochero. I wanted to see these roads that a saint built through the Sierras Grandes mountains—some overgrown trails, others paved and proud. They are completely ordinary, which is precisely why they are so striking. These were not highways that arose steadily out of zoning permits and construction budgets, those everyday miracles. No, these were handmade by a priest and his parish.

The poncho-wearing, cheroot-smoking José Gabriel del Rosario Brochero is often reduced to his nickname: the *gaucho* (cowboy) priest. In his native Argentina, however, Brochero is known for much more than his admittedly charming aesthetic. He manages to be celebrated as both civic hero and spiritual giant, apostle of the Spiritual Exercises (though not a Jesuit) and builder of highways, leper and aqueduct designer. He set out to be a pastor, and in the process also became the public servant par excellence—and as of last year, a canonized saint.

Born in 1840, Brochero grew up in the city of Córdoba at the tail end of the

country's civil war. For the intellectuals in Buenos Aires, this was a time of prosperity and progress, a new beginning. But Córdoba, suffering from vestigial civil-war strife and a cholera epidemic, struggled to adjust. Though beleaguered, the city retained its reputation as a center for learning. As a young priest, Brochero was based at the cathedral while studying at the university and teaching at Our Lady of Loreto Seminary. Progress slowly arrived to the region in the form of the Central Argentine Railway, the first line to connect two provinces. The railway, a collaboration between British investors and the Argentine government, brought jobs and a corresponding economic boost to the rural areas between the cities of Córdoba and Rosario. Brochero's experiences in Córdoba evidently had a great impact on him, as he went on to focus his ministry precisely on education and infrastructure.

At the age of 29, Brochero was entrusted with the extensive parish of San Alberto and its 10,000 residents. The shift from wealthy Córdo-

ba, gilded even in its suffering, could not have been more stark. His post was in the central village of Villa del Tránsito, founded just five years earlier. The region's poor residents were cut off from the rest of the country and from one another by the Sierras Grandes. As Brochero saw it, he was tasked not only with their spiritual care, but with incorporating them as citizens and extending to them all the privileges and resources thereof.

For instance, when he lacked the space and staff to provide the Spiritual Exercises in Tránsito, he personally led hundreds to the closest available retreat—125 miles away in Córdoba, where he had first encountered and become so enamored of the Exercises during his Jesuit education. It was a three-day journey by mule, caravan and foot, through heavy snow and with no access to roads. He led such groups for years until Tránsito's own House of Exercises (a building of significant proportions, no small feat for Brochero and his parishioners to construct with few materials and no way to import more) was inaugurated in 1877. For Brochero, the experience highlighted the parish's isolation and how it deprived residents not only of spiritual resources but educational and economic ones. He got to work.

Today, the House of Exercises is a museum dedicated to the saint, attached to the parish. The complex is austere, yellowed and plain, though it dominates the town square. On the winter day when I visited, in June 2017, a spare pilgrims' market and a single boom box murmured under-



Father Brochero saw a highway system as a way to address the economic struggles in his parish.

neath a billowing Argentine flag. A small iron gate, papered with church bulletins and holy cards, directed visitors through the gift shop into a bright courtyard. Here a single white rose popped out of the tame greenery, and a hollow bronze statue of a donkey peeked out from the corner. It was quiet, cold and empty, and being there felt strange, like a school out of session, which was exactly the case.

Brochero's early focus was on education, and he founded a school for girls here in 1880. That project also included constructing an aqueduct from nearby Río Panaholma, designs for which he included in letters to benefactors and cooperators, and a convent for the teachers. Not content with that, he became president of the

neighborhood association for another local school and served on the district school commission twice.

The rooms in the House of Exercises that once boarded young girls, their nun teachers and the retreatants they hosted are now home to a hodgepodge of exhibitions about Brochero and the parish he led. In one room, school desks; in another, saddles and hats; another room is crammed with dilapidated religious art, paper flowers stuffed into the hands of a burnished Jesus. The altar where Brochero celebrated daily Mass has been moved from its original chapel into a little alcove. Lovingly framed altar cards—a gift from his parishioners, imported from Spain—lean against the wooden tabernacle, above which the souls in

Purgatory leap out in bright red relief.

His confessional has been installed in the refectory, of all places. The flaps of wood that seal it hang open, as if paused in conversation. His bedroom is left much as it once was: metal frame, black crosses, a short desk, a thin rosary hanging from a nail on the wall. That last item is a prop; his own rosary is kept in a display case nearby. It is bulky, honey-colored, a gift in his old age from two parishioners who saw he was struggling to keep the delicate beads in his trembling hands. Next to it, his ponchos hang with his biretta.

None of this would have been possible without those highways. Brochero conceived of them originally as a way to address the economic struggles

Photo: Wikimedia Commons



## Questions After Jacopo Bassano's "Lazarus and the Rich Man"

By Philip Metres

in the parish. He took to infrastructure in order to connect the villages with nearby cities and open up trade and job opportunities. He built over 125 miles of roads, always with the help of his parishioners and often with support from the government as well. Roads in place, he was able to secure mail, messenger and telegraph services for the parish. The "Brocheriano" roads, as the system is called today, remain in vigorous use, though they transport substantially fewer ponchos and birettas these days.

The project dearest to Brochero, however, was bringing rail to the parish, perhaps inspired by the revitalization it brought to Córdoba. His letters from the summer of 1904 are jubilant about his proposed route, which he assured officials would be "free for the Nation" in that his parishioners were willing to buy the necessary land. It was approved the next year by the Legislature, though the Senate's minutes refer to the project as "inconvenient," "very difficult" and "very high cost." Such were Brochero's powers of persuasion.

His involvement was remarkable even to his contemporaries. A journalist at the time wrote of him in a Córdoba paper:

He is an exception: he practices the Gospel.... Lack for a laborer? He is a laborer. He rolls up his cassock as needed, takes the spade or the hoe and opens a public road in 15 days, helped by his parishioners, over whom he has absolute influence and to whom he sets an example and motivates with his personal effort.

Are the mottled dogs outside sniffing his sores  
or, their napes lowered, asking for the inside  
of his ashen hand? Will the empty plate  
on the rich man's table, muffled in embroidery,  
clatter to the cobbled floor? It's already late—  
where is the feast inside? Why does the lady  
turn from us toward the interior, showing only  
her shoulder, too large for her lovely frame, too wide,  
as if she were straining under an unseen weight?  
All's hidden in the open. Why are there no doors?  
Why the wind throttling apple trees, at the corner  
of sight? Will the manhandled lute, its black stomach  
empty and hidden inside the gold shimmer  
of catgut strings, be filled, at last, with music?

Philip Metres, *professor of English at John Carroll University and author of the poetry collection Sand Opera (2015), is the 2015 winner of the George W. Hunt, S.J., Prize for Excellence in Journalism, Arts & Letters.*

*This isn't just about coffee!  
It's about helping people!*

**Our freshly roasted organic Arabica Colombian coffee is a wonderful side benefit. All profits go to our Catholic missions for projects to help impoverished people around the world. Your cup of Saint Basil coffee can help change a life. Join our all-volunteer team by purchasing your coffee at:**

**[www.saintbasilcoffee.com](http://www.saintbasilcoffee.com)**

**or call 1-800-491-9319**



*Our coffee is certified "fair trade."*

Cup is not available for purchase



Villa Cura Brochero remains an extraordinary monument to Christian public service.

Image: Wikimedia Commons

That relationship with his parishioners was what made him exceptional as both a pastor and a public servant. Brochero kept close to all members of his community, from the poorest of his parishioners to the well-to-do patrons. In his old age, he was particularly close to the sick, to whom he ministered on the outskirts of Tránsito.

After visiting with and embracing a leper he met on the road, he contracted leprosy and began to go blind, which forced him to retire to his hometown of Santa Rosa del Río Primero. While there, he received some money in the mail from a well-to-do friend, Nicolás Castellano Piñedo. In his thank-you letter, dying from leprosy and too blind to write the letter himself, Brochero recounted having consulted with his sisters, friends and fellow priests before finally accepting the money. He made many promises of prayers and Masses in return, before confessing himself a little bemused:

I would also say to you all that I have always considered myself very rich. Because a person's wealth does not consist in the multitude of thousands of pesos he possesses but in his lack of needs, and I have so few. And those God himself satisfies, and others through the means of other people.

Two years after Brochero's death in Tránsito in 1914, the town was renamed in his honor. Today, Villa Cura Brochero remains an extraordinary monument to Christian public service, and his parish a lasting testament to its fruits.

The walls of the parish, now a shrine, are covered in fading gold plaques that thank Brochero for miracles and favors received through his intercession. His statue welcomes pilgrims near the door. On the day I visited, an elderly priest wearing a woven kaleidoscopic stole and jeans waited to hear confessions. A braid of flowers

surrounded the saint's relics, which are encased by glass panes so that they are visible from both the shrine and the chapel of the House of Exercises next door. On the shrine side, parents raised their children up to the glass to kiss it, touched their foreheads to the ground and left flowers.

The chapel side is empty, silent, freezing, though a bit of bright yellow light seeps in from the courtyard. It is outfitted exactly to Brochero's taste: wooden pews; stone floors; a sooty but immaculately stitched Our Lady of the Rosary in the back; and a dark, beloved Christ Crucified placed over the altar. Whatever he did for Tránsito, he did for him.

---

Catherine Addington is a writer and a doctoral student in Spanish at the University of Virginia. Her writing has appeared in *First Things* and *Unusual Efforts*, among other publications.

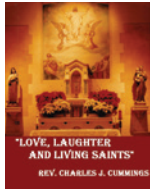
Twitter: @caddington11.

CLASSIFIED

BOOKS

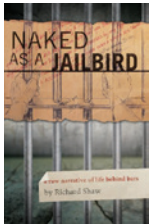
LOVE, LAUGHTER & LIVING SAINTS

Short Stories of Catholic School Days & 50 Years of Parish Happenings, by the Rev. Charles J. Cummings, retired priest, Diocese of Scranton, Pa. Book and preview available: Amazon paperback, \$12.95; Nook or Kindle e-book device \$4.99.

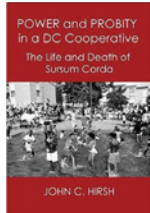


NAKED AS A JAILBIRD: A Raw Narrative of Life Behind Bars

A journalistic account of the shock rite of passage awaiting newcomers who enters the inside realm of our justice system's jails, where norms are dictated by staff and inmates who are in control; a Christian response. Available on Amazon.



Since 1970 Georgetown University has operated an undergraduate literacy program for young children at an apartment complex in Washington, D.C. known as Sursum Corda. This book is a journal kept by the Director between 2005 and 2017 that describes the break up of that community, and details the operation of the Georgetown program. Available on Amazon."



JOBS

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR – The Sisters of St. Ursula are seeking an Assistant Director for Linwood Spiritual Center. Details at: www.linwoodspiritualctr.org

PASTORAL ASSOCIATE – Saint Mark the Evangelist, a vibrant 1200+ family parish in an expanding area south of Birmingham, Alabama is seeking a Pastoral Associate who is flexible; willing to assume diverse responsibilities including outreach, building welcoming, authentic and inclusive community, providing support for pastoral ministries, and enriching the lives of parishioners with study and prayer. A Pastoral Theology degree and experience working within a parish required. Full job description is available. Send resume to Search Committee at P.O. Box 380396, Birmingham, AL 35238 or stmarkrc@bellsouth.net. Respond by March 5, 2018



*A Hunger for Wholeness:  
Exploring the  
Inner-Outer Universe*

A SEMINAR FEATURING  
**ILIA DELIO, OSF**  
WITH JOHN F. HAUGHT  
AND HEIDI RUSSELL

JUNE 10-13, 2018



Visit [saintmarys.edu/Spirituality](http://saintmarys.edu/Spirituality) to register online.

**CALLING ALL STUDENT WRITERS!**

America Media is proud to announce the **2018 Generation Faith** essay contest.

The winning entry will be awarded **\$1,000** and will be published in *America*.

For more information and submissions, visit [americamedia.submittable.com](http://americamedia.submittable.com)

America | MEDIA  
A JESUIT MINISTRY



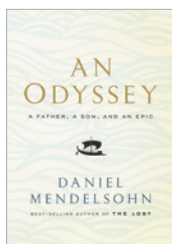
**SUMMER INSTITUTE 2018**  
**DOWNWARD MOBILITY**  
SHANE CLAIBORNE | ROBERT ELLSBERG | SUE MOSTELLER  
JUNE 18-20, 2018

 **OBLATE**  
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY  
WWW.OST.EDU | 210.341.1366

## Following Homer on a great adventure

By Thomas Jacobs

Daniel Mendelsohn tours the Mediterranean with his father in *An Odyssey*.



**An Odyssey**  
A Father, a Son,  
and an Epic  
By Daniel Mendelsohn  
Knopf. 320p \$26.95

On the surface, Daniel Mendelsohn's *An Odyssey* is a memoir about coming to know his father, Jay, framed through a close reading of Homer's *Odyssey*.

I was, I admit, wary of the premise. I just spent a year living down the street from my own father in rural Virginia, where picking weeds between

his silence and my 3-year-old son's chattering prompted countless hours of meditation on fathers and sons. Did I really need more of that? And knowing references to *The Odyssey* couldn't help but tilt the book toward the precious, I thought. Or was I being undeservedly possessive? I am something of an ersatz classicist, having attended St. John's College in Maryland, with its "Great Books" curriculum and required courses in ancient Greek. My tattered Richard Lattimore translation of Homer's *Odyssey* is still somewhere on the bookshelf; why not just reread the poem?

### LOST IN TRANSLATION

I was happily wrong. This book is much more than the sum of its parts; it is lucid textual analysis and a profound meditation on the inherent unknowability of the men who raise us. More than that, it is a moving portrait of the father Mendelsohn comes to know in the last years of his father's life.

They have always been somewhat inscrutable to one another. Mendelsohn's father, Jay, a mathematician, sees the world through an *X is X* lens. Only science is science. "That was when a song was a song." He is baffled and discouraged by the fact that his

Image: iStock



son does not understand even simple math. Mendelsohn, who earned a Ph.D. in classics from Princeton and is now a professor at Bard College, takes refuge from numbers in the delights of ancient language, “each verb with its scarily metastasizing forms.”

This is not to overstate the case. Jay admires that his son has learned ancient Greek because learning Greek is so hard; that must mean it is worth doing. And when Mendelsohn comes out as gay to his parents in the late 1970s, Jay’s tender reaction comes as a shock from this flinty man.

### EPIC JOURNEYS

*An Odyssey* comprises three interwoven threads: First, the year during which Jay, then 81 years old, sits in on his son’s undergraduate *Odyssey* seminar at Bard. (Amusingly, Jay steadfastly refuses to concede Odysseus’ heroism: “He’s not a hero because he cries. He’s not a hero because he cheats on his wife. He’s not a hero because he gets help from the gods!”) Then, that summer, the two embark on a cruise called “Journey of Odysseus: Retracing the *Odyssey* Through the Ancient Mediterranean.”

The second is Mendelsohn’s unpacking of *The Odyssey* itself, tackled both through re-creations of feisty conversations with his students and his own lucid and approachable scholarship. If I have any quibble with the book—and it is only a quibble—it is with the classroom scenes, which feel at times as if each student is cast in a role. Only one or two students emerge from the book as well-rounded characters in the same way Jay’s family and friends do. Yet I came away from even these passages with a renewed and deepened sense of the rewards

found in a close reading of the poem, as well as a sense of the continuity of that long-running endeavor. When the class chases an interpretive rabbit down a misleading hole, Mendelsohn consults with his own undergraduate professor, now a friend, who resolves the matter decisively by returning to the poem: “The text is the text, it says what it says. The answers are there. You just have to read more closely.”

Lastly, what is certainly the beating heart of the book is Mendelsohn’s Telemachian quest to better understand his stubborn, undemonstrative father. Like Telemachus, Mendelsohn must come to know his father through the stories others tell of him, stories that reveal a side of Jay that Mendelsohn has only glimpsed. His father—so say his students, his father’s friends, the passengers on the cruise—is actually *charming*. The revelation is not without a touch of bitterness: “Children always imagine that their parents’ truest selves are as parents; but why? ‘Who really knows his own begetting?’ Telemachus bitterly asks early in *The Odyssey*. Who indeed. Our parents are mysterious to us in ways that we can never quite be mysterious to them.”

### IN THE MIDDLE OF THINGS

In *The Odyssey*, Homer uses a storytelling device known as “ring composition” to circle backward and forward in time to give us more and more of Odysseus’ tale, all the while building toward moments of power and drama. Homer uses this device on several levels of scale in the poem: The voyage itself is told out of order; and within each of its episodes, Homer casts back and forth in time.

So, too, does *An Odyssey*. In this

and in other ways, the book echoes the poem. One of its strengths is how deftly Mendelsohn navigates the waters between the Scylla and Charybdis of overdoing and underusing these echoes. In contrast to the poem, whose episodes are well known to many readers, one of the great pleasures of this book can be found in the slow, deliberate unfolding of Jay’s story. What Mendelsohn thinks he knows about his father—the upbringing in a Jewish enclave of the Bronx, his stint in the U.S. Army after the Second World War, his careers as an aerospace mathematician and later a professor of mathematics—is undone and reassembled (dare I make a joke about Penelope’s loom?), and in the process a richer portrait of his father emerges.

*The Odyssey* is a part of his story, too, less a frame than a great mirror, for the poem endures 3,000 years after its composition because it is about *life itself*: marriage, fidelity, homecoming, fatherhood, sonship, duty, honor, love and, in true Greek style, preparation for death.

To encounter the poem, and to read it deeply, is to encounter ourselves. So it comes about that, standing before the ruins of Troy on a wind-swept hill in Turkey, Jay can smile crookedly at his son and confess: “But the poem feels more real than the ruins, Dan!”

Indeed. I think I will go find that Lattimore.

---

Thomas Jacobs is a novelist and a graduate of St. John’s College in Annapolis, Md. He was raised overseas, mostly in South America, Turkey and Spain.

## What happens after death?

Gerhard Lohfink, author of the critically acclaimed *Jesus of Nazareth: What He Wanted, Who He Was*, takes up a new question in his latest monograph, *Is This All There Is?: “What happens after death?”* For Lohfink, there are only two genuine options, either resurrection or inexorable nothingness. After arguing that other proposals (the immortality of the soul, survival in descendants, reincarnation, dissolution into the universe) are inadequate, he turns to divine revelation.

Revelation as it came to be articulated in Israel’s Scriptures is the result of reflection and understanding of God’s self-revelation through history: in Israel’s being liberated from slavery, in being formed into a human community and in being shown divine mercy in times of infidelity. With the coming of Jesus, God’s self-revelation in history reaches

its pinnacle, and the divine power to save is revealed in Jesus’ resurrection, which his followers came to realize was both eschatological (the beginning of the new messianic age) and collective (it pertains to everyone). The physicality of the Risen One shows that, in Lohfink’s words, “what is saved is not a bloodless soul but our whole life-history, our flesh and blood, everything we have been.”

Here we arrive at some of Lohfink’s most crucial claims. Both the unceasing creation (*creatio continua*) and the new creation of the world in the resurrection are acts of God’s creative love. The resurrection of the dead—along with the transformation of the world—is the goal of all history. In death, Lohfink writes, one encounters the living God—more precisely, God *in* the risen Christ, in whose face we see God. With death the so-called end of the world occurs for the dying; so too is experienced the return

of Christ, the resurrection and the judgment of the world.

Readers will find *Is This All There Is?* engaging and challenging. Lohfink wrestles with perennial questions, including how to talk about: God’s justice/wrath and mercy; God’s desire that everyone be saved (cf. 1 Tm 2:4) while hell remains a “fearful possibility”; and what genuine care for the dead should look like. As a New Testament scholar, I greatly appreciated his exegetical analyses, especially his interpretation of the imagery found in Revelation 21-22. Many readers, however, will be left wanting to hear more about how Lohfink would engage in dialogue with those who do not share his Christian beliefs.

Thomas D. Stegman, S.J., is dean of the Boston College School of Theology and Ministry.

## Transcending the self

Before “Buddhism” became the religious family of traditions that it is now, it was a spiritual path and simple way of life as lived and taught by a man whom his contemporaries around 2,600 years ago revered as an “awakened one” (Buddha). Transmitted from Asian societies to the West in different waves since the latter part of the 19th century, Buddhism now forms a part of the cultural and spiritual landscape of many Western societies.

What the best-selling author Robert Wright presents in this new book, *Why Buddhism Is True*, and affirms as “true” is a distilled “common core” that, he points out, can be found across the spectrum of Buddhist practices and teachings. Wright’s concern is not with doctrines or beliefs as such,

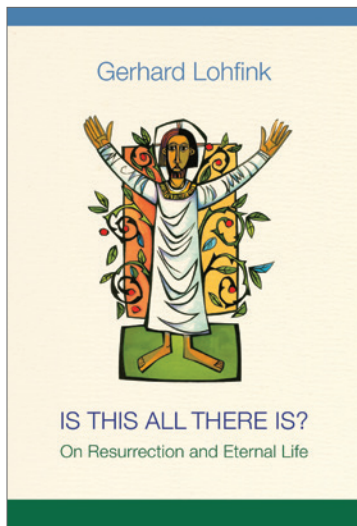
but with spiritual practice that can bring about a transformative shift in one’s view of oneself and of the world, and thus in one’s entire way of being. He writes from his own experience and reflection based on years of meditative practice under the guidance of his Western Buddhist teachers.

The spiritual practice that Wright advocates in this book derives from Buddhist mindfulness and insight meditation, but practitioners of other Buddhist forms of meditation, such as Zen or Tibetan *dzog chen*—or, for that matter, of Christian forms including centering prayer or contemplation according to the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius—will find resonating features that also occur in their own inward journeys through the silent terrain. A secular naturalist himself, Wright offers an in-

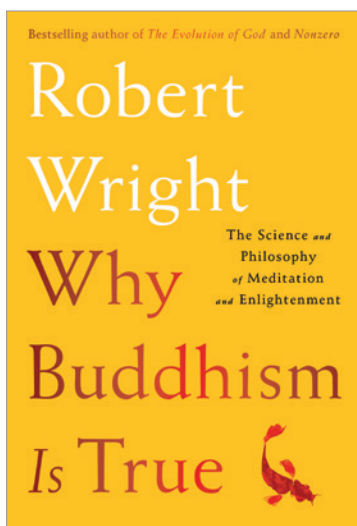
itation to readers across the religious divide to engage in a simple (though admittedly not easy) form of spiritual practice that can, however gradually and unobtrusively over time, bear momentous implications for our individual and collective lives.

With meditative practice, we are enabled to take steps to liberate ourselves from the mesmerizing power tribalism has over us, to bring forth the wisdom of clarity and to usher in a world in which “metaphysical truth, moral truth, and happiness can align...a world that...appears more and more beautiful—something to marvel at.” Indeed, what a wonderful world it would be.

Ruben L. F. Habito, author of *Experiencing Buddhism and Zen and the Spiritual Exercises (Orbis)*, serves as guiding teacher at Maria Kannon Zen Center in Dallas.



**Is This All There Is?**  
 On Resurrection and Eternal Life  
 By Gerhard Lohfink  
 (trans. Linda M. Maloney)  
 Liturgical Press. 314p \$34.95



**Why Buddhism Is True**  
 The Science and Philosophy of  
 Meditation and Enlightenment  
 By Robert Wright  
 Simon and Schuster. 321p \$27

## Blaming millennials

Malcolm Harris (born 1988) has painstakingly sought to describe the world that produced his generation. The result, *Kids These Days: Human Capital and the Making of Millennials*, is a highly readable work of economics and sociology that refuses the gimmicks of Freakonomics and the self-referential name-dropping common in the academy. “By every metric,” Harris writes, “this generation is the most educated in American history, yet millennials are worse off economically than their parents, grandparents, and even great-grandparents.”

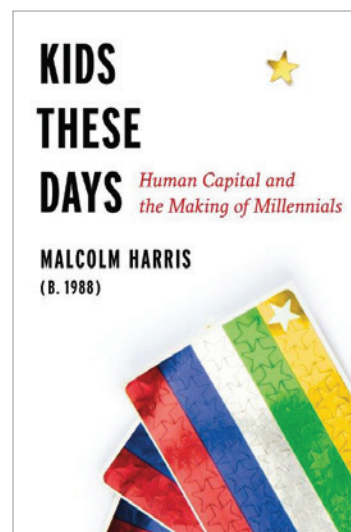
Harris divides his analysis into the institutions that most influence the development of children and young adults: school, university, the workforce, the internet and the media. A common theme is the onerous burden placed on millennials in the form of job training: from endless hours of homework (three times as much as past generations) to thousands of dollars in student loans (from which the government takes in more profit than Exxon) to the unpaid internships that some college programs require to graduate.

After discovering that “being under 35 is now correlated with poverty wages,” one might think it could not get any worse. But then Harris adds that “the average American child in the 1980s reported more anxiety than child psychiatric patients in the 1950s.” The only thing left to do is wipe your tears on the ribbon of your participation medal, walk to the smart toaster in your tiny home and whip up another avocado toast.

Harris observes the world soberly

and refuses to end his book with naïve platitudes that things will get better. They are likely to get worse. Millennials are faced with a choice, Harris writes: “We become fascists or revolutionaries, one or the other.” Many see in the election of President Trump evidence that fascism is on the rise in the United States. The question remains open if something will come along to inspire a tired, overworked and over-medicated generation to create a new world out of the dystopian algorithms our Silicon Valley overlords have given us.

Zac Davis, *assistant editor*;  
 Twitter: @zacdayvis.



**Kids These Days**  
 Human Capital and the Making of  
 Millennials  
 By Malcolm Harris  
 Little, Brown and Company. 272p \$25



## A jaw-dropping price for the ‘Savior of the World’

By Leo J. O’Donovan, S.J.

The sale last November at Christie’s Auction House in New York of Leonardo da Vinci’s “Salvator Mundi” for \$450.3 million stunned not only the art world but the public at large. The price was many times more than the previous record for a painting sold at auction. Adding to the drama of the occasion, the identity of the winning bidder was for a good while unknown.

The painting, perhaps originally painted for Louis XII of France, had been brought from France to England by Queen Henrietta Maria and remained in the English royal family through the rule of James II. It was known from a 1650 etching but disappeared in the late 18th century for over a century. Reappearing in 1900 as the work of Bernardini Luini, a prominent Lombard disciple of Leonardo, it was next interpreted as the work of Boltraffio, another Leonardo student, resold in 1958 for £45—and disappeared again.

In 2005 the painting resurfaced, unrecognized, and was sold for under

\$10,000. Badly over-painted, “aggressively over-cleaned” and with its walnut panel support cracked, the painting was finally restored in 2007 and shown in an exhibition in London in 2011.

What we see now is a full-frontally posed image, measuring 25 7/8 inches by 18 inches, of Christ with his right hand raised in blessing and his left holding a crystal orb. The Savior’s hair falls on either side of his face to just below his shoulders, ending in gold-lighted curls. His eyes are of slightly unequal size and uncertain focus, his nose straight and prominent, his lips closed and relatively small. His chin and light beard fade into his neck above a bare, unmodeled upper chest.

The blessing hand, which immediately recalls the raised hand of the painter’s “Saint John the Baptist” (c. 1500) in the Louvre, and the handsome robe of lapis lazuli blue, with its geometric border, are perhaps the most compelling parts of the painting, although close analysis of the crystal

globe (which would actually be far too heavy for anyone to hold in the present pose) reveals the artist’s great attention to the qualities of the crystal.

Prior to the sale, Christie’s pulled out all the stops to market the painting. It hired an outside advertising agency, dubbed the work “the male ‘Mona Lisa’” (playing down its actual religious significance) and trumpeted “the last da Vinci” (only 15 other paintings by him are known). A tour was organized from London to Hong Kong, San Francisco and finally New York, where for several days a pass to see the painting privately was the hottest ticket in town.

Well, this after all was said by a significant number of scholars to be a Leonardo. But not everyone has been convinced of the authenticity and quality of the painting. When it was shown in London, Charles Hope of the Warburg Institute called it “a curiously unimpressive composition.” Carmen Bambach of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, an organizer of the



Christie's dubbed the painting "the male 'Mona Lisa,'" playing down its actual religious significance.



museum's "Leonardo da Vinci, Master Draftsman" exhibition in 2003, doubts the entire panel is by Leonardo. Personally, I confess to finding the pose stiff, the eyes not mysterious but illegible, and the background deadening rather than elegant. If you happen to know that the "Salvator Mundi" is dated the same year as Albrecht Dürer's "Self-Portrait in a Fur Coat" (they are reproduced opposite each other in the catalogue), you might well think that there is no comparison in their respective authority.

The larger issue, of course, is that of the marketing and commodification of art today. The question is not new. Patronage has made great art possible from Gaius Maecenas to Cosimo de' Medici and on to J. P. Morgan and the Rockefellers. When Duncan Phillips bought Renoir's "Luncheon of the Boating Party" for \$125,000 in 1923, the price was considered astonishing.

The Metropolitan's purchase of "Aristotle With a Bust of Homer" for \$2.3 million in 1961 was front page news in *The New York Times*. Leonardo's

"Ginevra de' Benci" came to the National Gallery of Art, the only painting by the artist in America, for \$5 million in 1967. Each of those paintings was acquired, it is important to note, to be shown in a museum. And as a matter of fact, while the "Salvator Mundi" was at first reported to have been purchased by the little-known Saudi Prince Bader bin Abdullah bin Mohammed bin Farhaan, it soon became clear that he was acting on behalf of his friend, the country's 32-year-old crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman. And it now seems that "Salvator Mundi" is headed for display at the newly opened Louvre Abu Dhabi.

The current problem is that billionaire collectors from China, Russia and the Middle East have been driving prices ever higher, especially for contemporary art, not for museum collections principally but often as investments soon to be traded for still another "masterpiece" and attention-grabber. It is hard to imagine any effective regulation of the practice in a capitalist society, however socially-minded. The "last da Vinci" was a prime target, artfully teed up. Its sale recalls A. Richard Turner's comment, in his landmark book *Inventing Leonardo*, that "there is a 1550 Leonardo, an 1800 one, an 1850 one, and so on.... Each is a different character based on the needs of the given time that produced him, and each has ties to the Leonardo that went before." And this seems the time of plutocracy—and equally alarming poverty.

What has happened in the art market is analogous to the history of many religions, in which the early

illumination of founders gives way to superstition and the fundamentalist claims of autocratic authority. Grace yields to customary practice, sacramental vision to academic argument and community enlightenment to intellectual fashion. The divine becomes the dollar, and Andy Warhol is reverently quoted: "Being good in business is the most fascinating kind of art. Making money is art and working is art and good business is the best art."

I know of no remedy except for the continuing education of children, their parents and indeed all of us in learning truly to see. And I know of few mentors more helpful to that task than Joseph Conrad, who memorably wrote: "and if the [artist's] conscience is clear, his answer to those who in the fullness of a wisdom which looks for immediate profit, demand specifically to be edified, consoled, amused; who demand to be promptly improved, or encouraged, or frightened, or shocked or charmed, must run thus: My task which I am trying to achieve is, by the power of the written word, to make you hear, to make you feel—it is, before all, to make you see. That—and no more, and it is everything."

---

Leo J. O'Donovan, S.J., is president emeritus of Georgetown University and director of mission for Jesuit Refugee Service/USA.

# The Binding of Jesus

Readings: Gn 22:1-18, Ps 116, Rom 8:31-34, Mk 9:2-10

The troubling story that appears in the first reading this Sunday is traditionally called the “Binding of Isaac.” Having received his long-hoped-for son, Abraham now receives instructions from God to offer the boy as a whole-burnt offering. At the very last minute God intervenes, but not before it becomes clear to Isaac—and the horrified reader—that Abraham is ready to go through with the ritual. Although Isaac goes free and Abraham is rewarded for his fidelity, no one feels good about the incident. Rabbinic tradition connects Sarah’s death, related in the next chapter, to her shock at the event, and other ancient nonbiblical traditions claim that Isaac spoke forever after with a stutter.

Even the best biblical scholars today struggle to explain this narrative’s original meaning. It may have had something to do with the prohibition of child-sacrifice in ancient Israel, although legislation in Exodus and Deuteronomy was probably more effective in that regard. It may have been a parable about Abraham’s passionate fidelity to God; but if so, it made ancient commentators question the goodness of a God who would demand such a thing. Given certain features of its grammar, a few scholars have even wondered if this account was originally a scribal training exercise and never meant to be sacred Scripture. The “Binding of Isaac” raises more questions than it answers.

But scholars do know how this story was understood in Jesus’ day, and that understanding is key to an interpretation of this Sunday’s Gospel. Jewish traditions of the first century A.D. emphasized a detail that is utterly lacking in the Bible. Isaac, they relate, was a willing victim. He knew what God had demanded of his father, and he offered himself for the success of the covenant. Isaac emerges from these accounts a martyr, a hero. Some of these stories even claimed that Isaac died on the altar, but that God raised him and returned him to his father.

These nonbiblical traditions were widespread because the Jewish people in Jesus’ day had only recently emerged from a time of persecution. Stories of good Jews

*‘This is my beloved Son.  
Listen to him.’ Mk 9:7*

## PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

How can you recommit yourself to God’s call?

How can your obedience to God free someone else from death?

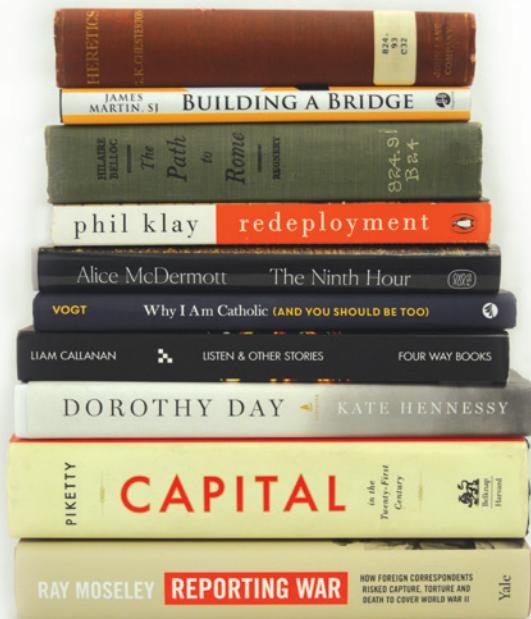
sacrificing themselves for their nation were popular, and the “Binding of Isaac” became such a story. Even if Jesus and his disciples knew the biblical narrative by heart, they would have also known a version in which Isaac achieved lasting fame by giving himself freely for Israel.

Mark wrote his account of the transfiguration in this light. Jesus is Isaac, offering himself freely for the good of all. The transfiguration thus fulfills Isaac’s example and foreshadows the cross. The transfiguration also prefigures the resurrection. The events in today’s Gospel passage symbolize the perfect obedience that led to Jesus’ glory and the salvation of all.

For Isaac, obedience brought forth a nation. For Jesus, self-offering led to glory. This glory was not, as many might think, an efflorescence of pride or a magnification of ego. Instead it was an obscure life and dishonorable death that somehow freed others to live and die in grace. Just so, we must offer ourselves for the good of others. If our quiet acts of transformation this Lent help even one other person feel the love of God, then we have learned to live out the mystery of the Transfiguration.

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

# America | CATHOLIC BOOK CLUB



*Join America readers and editors today to discuss the best of contemporary literature. Our members also enjoy additional literary resources as we come together around our shared enjoyment of and appreciation for that time-honored treasure, a good book.*

[americamagazine.org/catholic-book-club](http://americamagazine.org/catholic-book-club)

THE HANK CENTER FOR THE CATHOLIC INTELLECTUAL HERITAGE



AN EVENING WITH

## GEORGE SAUNDERS

No author is traditional, but George Saunders still manages to stand out. Raised Catholic in Chicago but now a practicing Tibetan Buddhist, the author has a decidedly individual take on spirituality. Join the Loyola University Chicago community for an evening of readings, discussions, and more.

March 1 • 8 p.m.  
1032 W. Sheridan Road, Chicago  
Lake Shore Campus

[LUC.edu/ccih](http://LUC.edu/ccih)



## Let's talk religion and politics

...and sexuality, economics, and justice.

Come to Pacific School of Religion, a progressive, radically inclusive, multi-denominational seminary

and a member school of the Graduate Theological Union.



Explore how your faith speaks to the issues of the day, in church and society!

[www.psr.edu/inquiry](http://www.psr.edu/inquiry)  
510/849-8351

PACIFIC  
School of Religion  
BERKELEY, CA

# Take These Out of Here!

Readings: Ex 20:1-17, Ps 19, 1 Cor 1:22-25, Jn 2:13-25

God's presence in the Temple foreshadowed God's presence in Jesus and in every Christian, but this is easy to forget. Sometimes Jesus has to grab our attention and turn it back to God.

This theme runs through the opening chapters of John's Gospel. Moses' teachings foreshadowed the grace and truth that came through Jesus Christ (1:17). When asked if he were the messiah, John the Baptist pointed instead to Jesus. At Cana, the water that was set aside to fulfill the law became the wine that foreshadowed the great feast at the end of time. Soon after the episode in today's Gospel, Jesus helped Nicodemus understand that physical birth prefigures a second birth, "from above," when each Christian receives the Spirit. Each of these passages points to God at work in some way people have missed.

This is also the message of today's readings. The Ten Commandments, for example, were not arbitrary obligations but reminders of that day when God said to Israel, "I am the Lord your God!" The commandments reminded Israel that God was present. This divine presence was Israel's most treasured possession. Many Israelites believed that God was really present in the Temple. This belief is clearly shown in the name usually used for the Temple in Jerusalem, *bêt yhw*, "House of Yahweh." (By contrast,

the technical Hebrew term for a temple, *hékāl*, is comparatively rare.) In this Sunday's Gospel, Jesus plays on this understanding. Literally, the Greek reads, "Stop making the temple of my Father a temple of merchandise." Jesus takes dramatic action to refocus attention on the divine presence in the Temple.

The activity he interrupts was not illegal or even clearly unethical. The moneychangers ensured that Jews visiting the Temple could abide by the very laws mentioned in our first reading. Roman coins bore images of foreign deities. Such objects profaned the temple and were banned from its precincts. The livestock merchants were important as well. God's own law demanded animal sacrifice, and the poor of Jerusalem depended on the uneaten portions of the Temple sacrifices for their own sustenance. The buzz of these transactions, however, drew attention away from the treasure within, God's own presence.

Jesus' actions caused this activity to cease temporarily and gave worshippers the opportunity to remember why the Temple was holy. Jesus imposed a brief "fast" on the Temple. As this Sunday's second reading explains, God's wisdom is not always clear to human beings. John the Evangelist presents this episode as the beginning of opposition to Jesus. Those who did understand learned something deeper. Jesus is the true temple. His own body brought to completion the work that God had started at Sinai. Jesus takes the divine presence "on the road," and hands it over to his disciples after his resurrection.

Today's Gospel reminds us how challenging it is to keep our attention on God. If people can forget God even in the Temple, how much more can they forget God present in their brothers and sisters. When Jesus silenced the commotion in his Father's house, he taught us to drive out all that distracts us so that we might catch sight of God's presence in the hearts of all.

*'Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up.'*

*Jn 2:25*



## PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

What has Jesus done to turn your attention back to God?

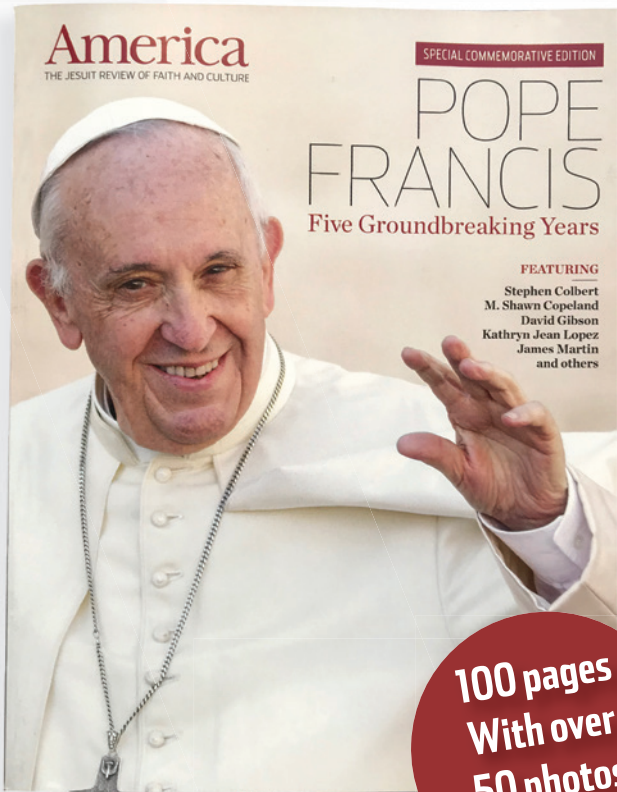
How can you "cleanse your temple" this Lent?

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

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



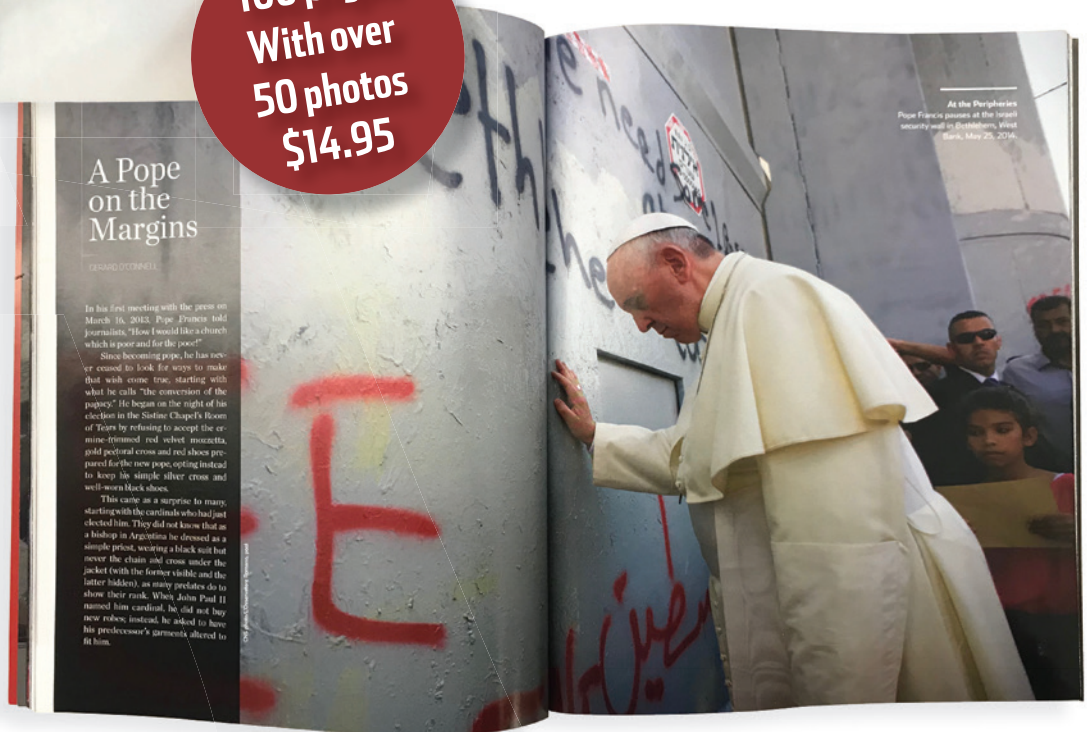
CATHOLIC  
INITIATIVES



# Purchase your commemorative issue today

Featuring beautiful full-color photos and content from America's contributors, with an introduction by America editor-at-large Fr. James Martin, S.J., and a concluding essay by award-winning Catholic journalist and author David Gibson, this one-of-a-kind issue includes in-depth explorations of Pope Francis' background, impact and hopes for the future.

100 pages  
With over  
50 photos  
\$14.95



To purchase the Pope Francis commemorative issue or to give as a gift, please call 1-800-627-9533 or contact us at <https://americamag.org/francis5>



# Women Deserve Better

*For over 45 years, Feminists for Life has been committed to spreading pro-life feminism*

By Serrin M. Foster

This year, thousands gathered in Washington, D.C., for the 45th annual March for Life, a protest against the practice and legality of abortion that coincides with the anniversary of the Supreme Court's landmark ruling in *Roe v. Wade* in 1973.

Feminists for Life of America, a pro-life feminist organization founded in 1972 by Pat Goltz and Cathy Callaghan, attends the march every year. I joined F.F.L. in 1994 as executive director. After hearing a board member recall that because of a lack of housing, child care and maternity coverage, she had considered an abortion while in college, I realized that I had never seen a visibly pregnant student during any of my many visits to campuses as a guest lecturer. Thanks to our feminist beliefs, F.F.L. was in a unique position to provide resources to support women like our board member.

We began by listening to women and working with stakeholders on both sides of a contentious debate. We then developed a strategic plan and program components with the goal that women would not be forced to choose between sacrificing their education and career plans and sacrificing their children. We began our College Outreach Program in 1994 and since then have hosted events at schools like Georgetown, Northwestern and Pepperdine.

In the first 10 years after our college outreach program began, there

was a dramatic 30 percent decrease in abortions among college-educated women. Working with—not against—university administrators has been key to spreading effective solutions and inspiring other groups, including pro-choice activists, to join us.

Working with people with whom we disagree on the issue of abortion (and who disagree with us) is not unique to our efforts on campus. We have been the only pro-life group to work in coalition with other women's organizations to fight cuts to welfare, the first to advocate for the extension of coverage for working-poor pregnant women in the Child Health Insurance Program and the only pro-life group to advocate successfully for the Enhanced Child Support Enforcement Act, which helped streamline the collection and distribution of child support, especially across state lines.

This past summer, Feminists for Life launched Women Deserve Better, an online resource that provides women with information on areas like how to build a career, how to succeed as a working parent and knowing your rights at work. We feature articles like "How to Tell Him He's Going to Be a Dad" and "An Adoption Journey of Openness and Authenticity."

Feminists for Life recognizes that abortion is a symptom of, not a solution to, the continuing struggles women face in the workplace, on campus, at home and in the world at

large. Our mission is to eliminate systematically the coercive factors that drive women to abortion—in particular, a lack of resources and support. We have also worked to educate men about the rights, responsibilities and joys of fatherhood.

The work done at Feminists for Life of America is crucial. For the 45th annual March for Life, F.F.L. members traveled from as far away as Australia to walk in solidarity with our allies in the pro-life movement. Roughly 1,000 marchers carried placards declaring "Peace Begins in the Womb" and "Women Deserve Better Than Abortion." We walked in the footsteps of our pro-life feminist foremothers, like Susan B. Anthony.

It is up to us to realize their unfulfilled vision. We hope to continue spreading the feminism of Anthony and to continue to raise a generation of leaders who will change the United States and the world through women-centered solutions. Women deserve better.

*Serrin M. Foster is president of Feminists for Life of America, the creator of the Women Deserve Better campaign and editor in chief of The American Feminist.*

Special sale for *America* readers

## Join one of America's Leading Jesuits on an Unforgettable Retreat

As Jim Martin, S.J., says, "Howard Gray is one of the great Jesuit spiritual masters of our time." Take him as your personal guide in **A Jesuit Retreat with Rev. Howard Gray, S.J.**, a 5-CD audio retreat that you can experience whenever and wherever you choose.

**C**elebrated internationally for his retreats and Ignatian lectures, Georgetown University's Rev. Gray is at once an inspirational and down-to-earth spiritual leader. Now, you can experience his teaching in your home or car with this 12-conference audio retreat.

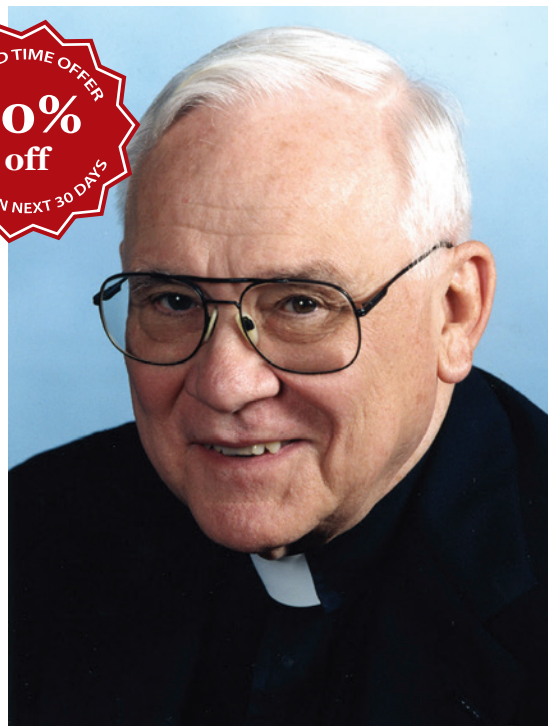
**A Jesuit Retreat with Rev. Howard Gray, S.J.** will help individuals and groups enter into the experience of prayer as laid out in the classic, *The Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola*. As you explore these spiritual guidelines anew, you will reflect on your relationship with God and your understanding of yourself.

### Rediscover a Spiritual Classic

*The Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola* is not merely a book to be read, but a set of guidelines to discover the meaning of God in one's life—a way to know God, Christ, and oneself better.

The Ignatian process leads you through the revelation that lies at the center of Christian faith, that guides its hope and inspires its love.

This program was produced by Now You Know Media. Now You Know Media's mission is to bring you the best Catholic professors and retreat leaders in America. Visit our website, [www.NowYouKnowMedia.com](http://www.NowYouKnowMedia.com), to browse our growing catalog of over 300 courses and retreats available in CD, DVD, and MP3 formats.



### A Pilgrimage Toward Hope and Love

In this retreat with Rev. Gray, you will undertake a pilgrimage of hope and love. Throughout the stages of this journey, you will confront the personal meanings of creation, sin and forgiveness, the life and mission of Jesus, and the impact that each has on your daily life.

The rhythm of the *Exercises* marches you in time with a call to selflessness. A world that reflects the peace, justice, and love preached by Christ begins with you.

Embark on this Ignatian pilgrimage at home, while driving, or with others.

### A Jesuit Retreat with Rev. Howard Gray, S.J.



12 Conferences (25 minutes/conference)  
+ electronic study guide

**SAVE \$84**

5-CD Set ~~\$119.95~~ **SALE \$35.95**

Coupon Code: **A2182** +\$.85 Shipping & Handling

Must order within 30 days of issue date

**1-800-955-3904**

<https://www.NowYouKnowMedia.com/Gray>

Now You Know Media, Inc.  
12115 Parklawn Dr., Unit B • Rockville, MD 20852

# THE JESUIT RETREAT CENTER OF LOS ALTOS, CALIFORNIA

Weekend Retreats with topics such as Ignatian Spirituality, Science and Religion, Grief, Prayer, and more

Individually Directed Retreats

Summer 30-Day and 8-Day Retreats

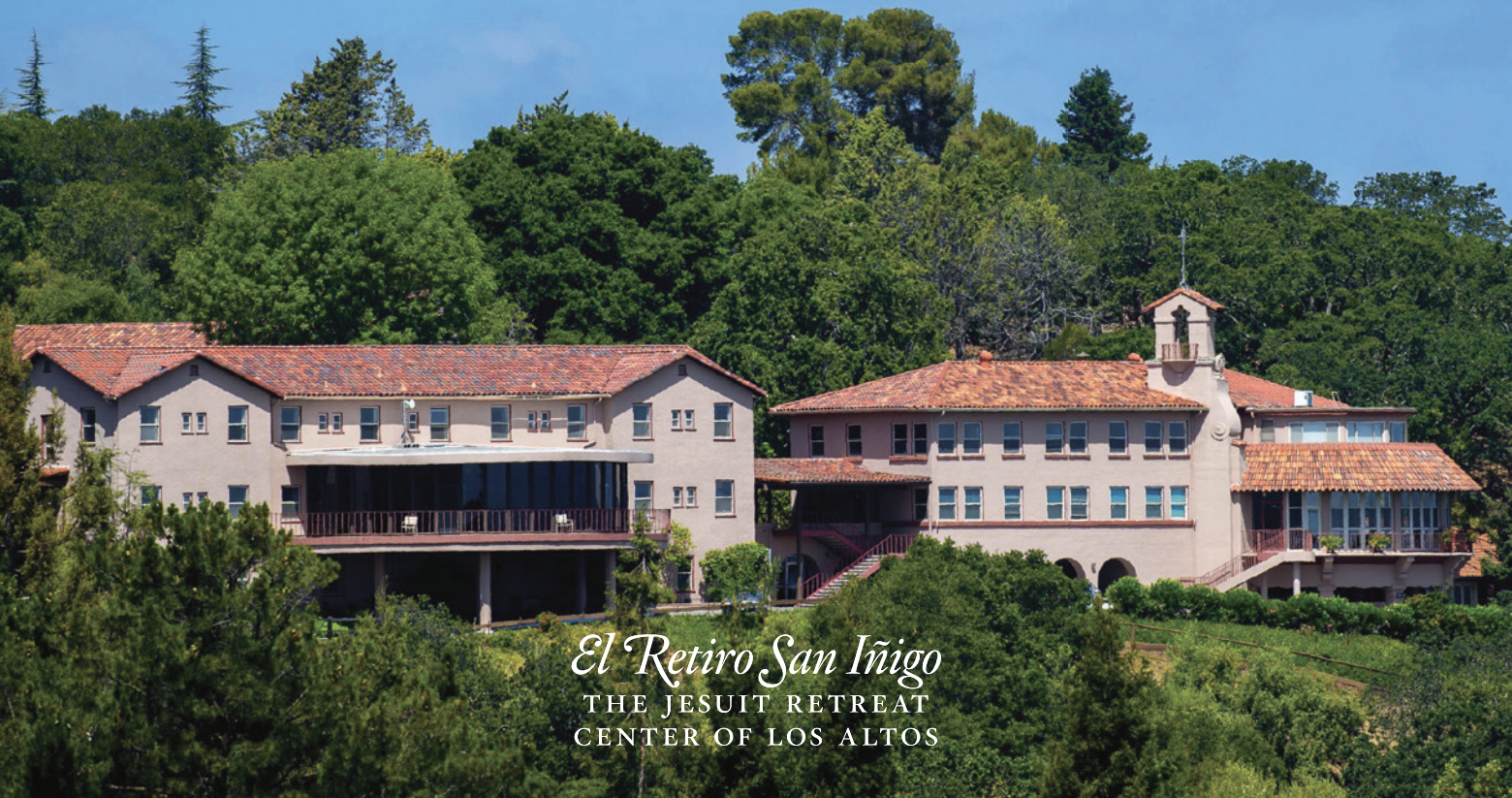
- Conference Facilities for Outside Groups

- Located 40 miles south of San Francisco

- Private en suite rooms

- 38 hilly acres with trails and vistas

**[www.jrclosaltos.org](http://www.jrclosaltos.org)**  
**(650) 917-4000**



*El Retiro San Inigo*  
THE JESUIT RETREAT  
CENTER OF LOS ALTOS