

# America



THE JESUIT REVIEW OF FAITH AND CULTURE

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## *The Lives Beyond the Wall*

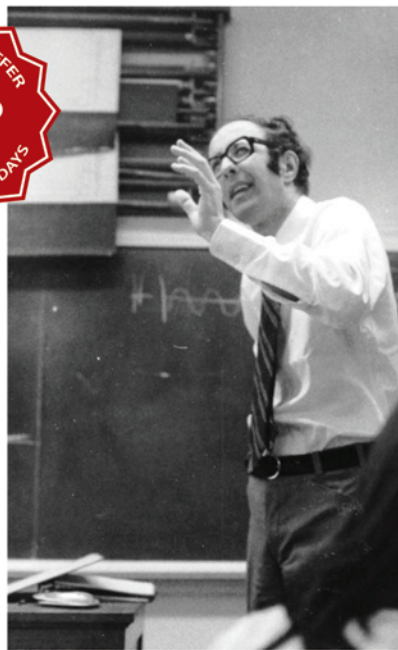
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JANUARY 23, 2017

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# Join Henri Nouwen on the Search for Meaning



Henri Nouwen (1932–1996)

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## Find Light in Darkness

In our culture of superlatives that idolizes stars and record-breakers, we desire to stand out from others. As you will learn, however, to be human is not to be apart from, but rather a part of community. Indeed, God came to us in Jesus Christ, who became human—to the point of accepting death on the Cross.

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# Welcome to the new **America** magazine

You hold in your hands the product of a year's worth of planning and design by the most dedicated team I know, who serve the most loyal readers in publishing. This is the new **America**, a fresh approach to the smart, Catholic take on faith and culture that has been our hallmark since 1909. Within these pages, you'll discover a media ministry that has been reimaged for the 21st century. Yet as we take this bold step forward, our true north is the mission articulated by our founding editors: to lead the conversation about faith and culture in the United States; to furnish "a record of Catholic achievement and a defense of Catholic doctrine, built up by skillful hands in every region of the globe."

The first editor in chief, John Wynne, S.J., told his readers in **America's** debut issue that "until such time as a daily may be possible" the Jesuits would publish a weekly review. Thanks to the digital revolution, Father Wynne's vision has been realized: In addition to our new biweekly print edition, **America** now publishes daily, even hourly, online and through social media.

It is no easy task to relaunch a magazine, and the "skillful hands" that have labored for countless hours to reach this milestone are too numerous to name. The lion's share of the credit, of course, goes to the talented team of professionals whose names grace our masthead. They are an inspiration to me and I am proud to introduce you to their work.

In this new issue, you will find some familiar features, given a fresh look and feel, as well as some innovative new departments: Our Take is the new name for **America's** editorial. As my predecessor Joseph A. O'Hare, S.J., liked to say, "a journal of opin-

ion ought have an opinion of its own." But we don't want to be the only ones talking. That's why in every issue you'll also find the Short Take, an op-ed from a notable writer or public figure. This week's Short Take comes from Elizabeth Bruenig of *The Washington Post*, one of a dozen new contributing writers we've recruited.

There's also a section called Your Take, the place where we ask you to join the conversation by your letters, emails, Facebook posts and a new reader poll conducted online for every issue. Dispatches is our redesigned news and current events section with reporting and analysis from our global network of correspondents, all presented in a fresh and inviting design.

Faith in Focus is our section for theology and spirituality, featuring thoughtful essays and reflections by theologians, church leaders, public figures and inspiring people in the pews. In this issue, we feature an interview with the Jesuit priest who serves as chaplain to the U.S. House of Representatives.

Our feature articles are the heart of the new **America**. In the coming months we will bring you compelling new stories from the intersection of the church and the world, written by an outstanding slate of writers, many of whom you've not seen in **America** before. The current issue features an original report from Central America on the migrant crisis that is gripping the hemisphere, plus an inside report on how Pope Francis' unique style of governance is changing the church.

In the back of the magazine you'll find Ideas in Review, everything from book and multimedia reviews to profiles of outstanding authors and essays about cultural and so-

cial trends. This issue features an exclusive interview with the actor Andrew Garfield, who stars in "Silence," the new film from Martin Scorsese about the Jesuits in 17th-century Japan.

The last page of the magazine is called Last Take. In each issue, a different newsmaker or journalist will offer a personal reflection on news and events. In her **America** magazine debut, the veteran journalist Cokie Roberts talks about women in the new U.S. Congress.

And of course, every issue will feature the Word column, reflections on the cycle of readings for every Sunday Mass.

Also, later this month we will relaunch our website, [americamagazine.org](http://americamagazine.org). You'll find it much easier to navigate and chock full of great new content and features, from additional essays and reporting to documentaries and interviews from America Films, as well as the weekly podcast of "America This Week" from SiriusXM radio.

And this is only the beginning. As we set forth into the future together, please know how deeply grateful we are for your loyalty and support. I promise you that we will work every day to earn anew the trust you place in us and, in the words of Father Wynne, "neither labor nor expense will be spared to make **America** worthy of its name." Enjoy the issue. And, as always, please let us know what you think.

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



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A wall in Tijuana, Mexico, separating Mexico and the United States. Immigrants from Central America risk extortion, kidnapping and rape on the 2,500-mile trek to the border.

Photo: CNS photo/Jorge Duenes, Reuters  
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# Which issue should Donald J. Trump focus on in his first 100 days as president?

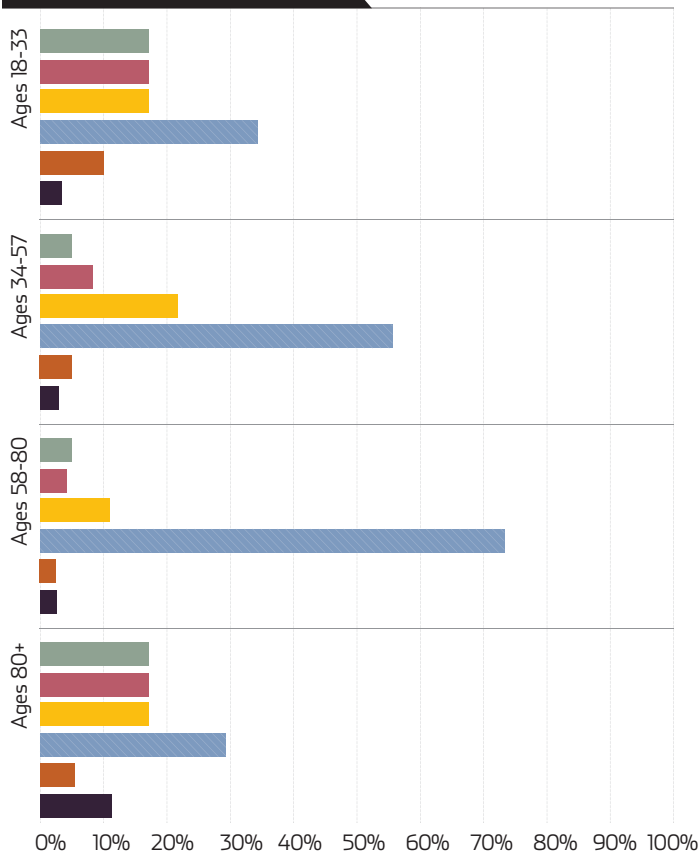
This question, pitched to **America** readers on social media, received hundreds of written responses over three days. While our readers had different ideas about how Mr. Trump should shape economic policy and tackle poverty, over 60 percent agreed that this topic should be the president-elect's foremost concern. "Mr. Donald J. Trump should focus on how our society treats its most vulnerable members," wrote David Lester, from Oregon. "Donald Trump should work with the rest of our leaders to address the social injustices inherent in our systems and root them out, so that everyone has the ability to live with the dignity that we all deserve."

Victoria S. Schmidt noted that, given the focus on jobs during the president-elect's campaign, successful economic policy will be essential "in order to gain the trust and support of the American people" in Mr. Trump's first days in office. From Texas, Millie Wilson explained that she hoped

to see Mr. Trump initiating "job retraining where necessary; incentives for manufacturing companies to stay in the United States; and better education for young adults." Notably, the category economics and poverty was most important to readers in the age bracket 58 to 80 and of least interest to readers over 80 years old.

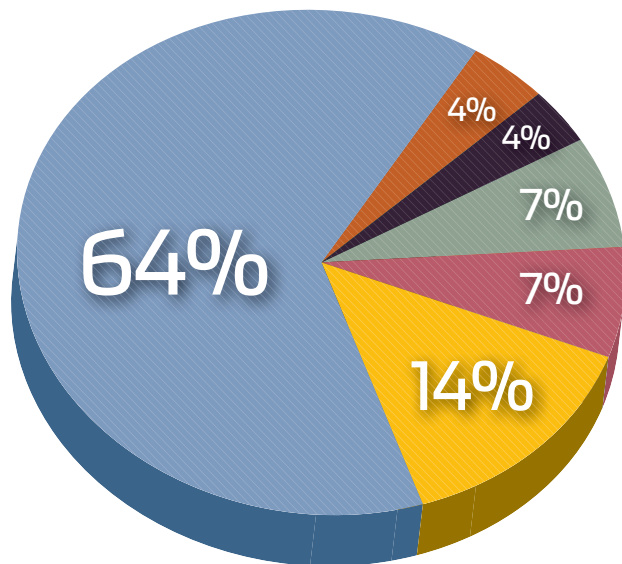
For other **America** readers who wrote to us, these political issues are interconnected and difficult to consider in isolation. Barb Contreras, from Ohio, saw "keeping and 'tweaking' Obamacare" as an economic issue, and Jo Siedlecka, from the United Kingdom, noted the link between concern for both the environment and the economy. "With his business expertise," Ms. Siedlecka wrote, "Donald Trump could make America a leader in fossil-free fuel technology, creating new jobs and helping to save the environment."

READER RESPONSES BY AGE



OVERALL READER RESPONSES

- ECONOMICS & POVERTY
- RACE
- EDUCATION
- ENVIROMENT
- RIGHT TO LIFE ISSUES
- FOREIGN POLICY



*These results are based on reader responses to a poll promoted on Facebook, Twitter and in our email newsletter.*

### **An Underutilized System**

Re “The Right to Ride” (Editorial, 1/2): It is very encouraging that the editors took notice of the need to plan and fund public transportation. The weakness of mass transit and commuter railroads is that it must be built for peak conditions and therefore for many hours the system is underutilized.

**James Schwarzwald**

Online Comment

### **Vital to Productivity**

Improving transport is vital to productivity, growth and quality of life. Aside from a couple of major cities, infrastructure is crumbling in the United States. Go to cities like Singapore, Seoul and London and see how it is done. Our current trajectory is a race to the bottom.

**Brian Parker**

Online Comment

### **Healing Power of Prayer**

Re “Immigrants and the Jinn,” by Erik Raschke (1/2): Mr. Raschke’s article sheds light on an important consideration for mental health professionals. Visiting mosques is a healing experience for some. Prayer-observant Muslims must consider the risks and benefits of taking a sedating medication, as prayer times vary according to the sun. Mental health clinicians must remember that medications are not the only path to wellness.

**Susan E. Jacobson**

Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner

Co-Chair Northern Virginia Coalition for Refugee Wellness  
Fairfax, Va.

### **The Good of Conscience**

Re “Called to Conscience,” by James F. Keenan, S.J. (1/2): Thank you for the most thoughtful article. I am saving it for future reference.

In my layman’s way of learning, I have learned that conscience is not completely reliable as a reference point for people’s behavior, but it can be good. First, we have to test our conscience by comparing it with Scripture, because we are by nature fallen and imperfect. Second, we can make our consciences unreliable by suppressing them willingly and forming a habit of doing so. Third, Scripture does not tell us to follow our conscience alone for the two reasons just given.

**James MacGregor**

Online Comment

### **Integrated Spiritual Goals**

In his thought-provoking article, James Keenan, S.J., offers theological claims to help us “appreciate the conscience as the personal and social seat of moral responsibility.” The article caused me to wonder if we as individuals, and as a society, have integrated spiritual goals that give our conscience the pinch needed for authentic guilt, repentance or humility.

I think the sacrament of reconciliation is celebrated less because many people do not take the values and virtues of the Gospel to heart. That is why our dear Pope Francis is right in saying our efforts at evangelization must begin within our own communities.

**(Rev.) Joseph M. Corley**

Darby, Pa.

### **A Cinematic Sacrament**

Congratulations to **America** and to James Martin, S.J., for an extraordinary interview with Martin Scorsese (“Creating ‘Silence,’” 12/26).

Upon seeing my first Scorsese film, “Mean Streets,” in 1973, I felt immediately that the director was a special talent, whose conscience was shaped by the Catholic Church. Paying close attention to his career over the more than 40 years since “Mean Streets,” I learned from his films and many interviews that he was greatly influenced by movies and the Catholic Church while growing up on the Lower East Side. I kept waiting for a profound wedding between his technical skill and his Catholic conscience. My wait is over; the marriage has taken place. “Silence” is a masterpiece.

Catholics believe that salvation has been accomplished through the death and resurrection of Jesus and that the Holy Spirit can be encountered in this world through family, friends, nature, history and art—and I think, among the arts, perhaps especially through film because of its accessibility and potential power. The poet Gerard Manley Hopkins, S.J., said it succinctly: “The world is charged with the grandeur of God.” As Pope Francis emphasized in “Laudato Si’,” all of creation is sacred and can be sacramental, a graced way to God. “Silence” may be the most profoundly personal film ever created by an American filmmaker. It is also a cinematic sacrament.

**(Rev.) Robert Lauder**

Queens, N.Y.

## It's Time to Fix the 'Sunday School' Culture

A public school with a dropout rate of 50 percent and two-thirds of local parents opting out of it would be considered failing. If the school were unable to turn those numbers around in a few years, it would likely be shut down. And yet for decades, Catholic parishes in the United States have invested in religious education programs that have proven no more effective. Today, more than half of Catholic millennials report going to Mass a few times a year or less, and, according to a 2014 poll, 68 percent of Catholic parents decide not to enroll their child in any formal Catholic religious education.

To say that there is a crisis in religious education in this country is not to discount the profound generosity of many volunteers and teachers who sustain parish programs around the country. If their dedication were the only factor determining success, there would be no problem. Yet in many, if not most settings, religious education is not accomplishing its purpose: to hand on the faith from generation to generation. Both surveys and experience suggest the U.S. church is reaching a possible breaking point in that chain. Ineffective catechesis—whether in the parish setting or in Catholic schools—is not the sole cause of the rise of the so-called nones; but for the most part, religious education as presently conducted does not give these young people a compelling reason to believe.

The first step is admitting there is a problem—and any parent who has dragged a squirming fifth grader to an hour of Sunday school can say what it is: Most 10-year-olds do not want to spend their weekend

in a classroom. More fundamentally, the assumptions built into the current system of religious education, developed at a different time and in a different cultural context, no longer hold. There was a time when religious belief and self-identification were default positions, supported by social norms. But today, when young people are surrounded by a culture in which choosing to believe is more and more a revolutionary act, religious education must do much more than hand on the basic tenets of the faith. Unless the option of belief is made real by family and community relationships that offer examples of true Christian discipleship, creedal affirmations are taking root in rocky soil.

The good news is that innovative models of catechesis that look beyond the classroom, like family-based religious education, Catechesis of the Good Shepherd and programs that center on small group discussion and service, have shown great potential. What seems to be the key is that these models are not just about education but formation. They work to make discipleship tangible and imaginable first, rather than focusing on transmitting the content of the faith. Not coincidentally, they can also be resource-intensive, requiring greater involvement and investment on the part of families, parish staff and clergy. No program, however, can ever replace the central role of parents as “the principal and first educators of their children” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, No. 1653). We must also discern how to form parents for this mission.

Changing “Sunday school” culture and Catholic schools’ religion classes into a relational process of faith formation is no simple task. It will require church leaders to admit that the path we have been on for decades is not sufficient to respond to today’s needs and cannot be fixed merely

with different books, better curricula or more training. And it will require parents to demand and to help build parish communities that not only teach the faith but live it out joyfully. “Let the little children come to me,” Jesus said, “and do not hinder them.” Now is the time for the church to reflect on these words and move urgently to develop religious formation programs that introduce children to the person at the heart of our faith, who desires not only well-informed students but lifelong disciples.

---

## The United States Must End Its Tolerance of Landmines

Twenty years ago this month, Diana, Princess of Wales, toured war-ravaged Angola and caused an uproar by calling for a global ban on landmines. Members of the British royal family are expected to be scrupulously nonpartisan and non-political; by wading into a controversial public policy debate, the princess had committed a constitutional faux pas. Yet Diana brought much-needed attention to the issue. Even today thousands of civilians worldwide are maimed or killed each year by these indiscriminate weapons of war. According to a recent report by the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, “every day, an average of 18 people were killed or injured by mines or explosive remnants of war in 2015,” the most recent year for which data is available. That number is still too high, but it is dramatically lower than the estimated 26,000 casualties per year recorded in the 1990s.



In 1997, shortly after Diana's death, the I.C.B.L. spearheaded the effort to enact an international treaty that bans the use, production, stockpiling and transfer of antipersonnel mines. The Ottawa Convention, as the treaty is known, currently has 162 state signatories, making it one of the most widely accepted international agreements. Unfortunately, while the United States has unilaterally adopted stricter controls on landmines, it has yet to sign the agreement on a global ban, putting the United States in the same camp as other holdouts, like Russia and China.

U.S. officials have argued over the years that landmines are inexpensive and essential tools for national defense. Successive administrations have also expressed concern for the security of the Korean Peninsula, where thousands of landmines serve as a deterrent against northern excursions across the 38th parallel. Still, the United States observer at the annual meeting of state signatories, held last December in Chile, told delegates that the United States is committed to finding "ways that would allow us to ultimately fully comply with and accede to the Ottawa Convention."

The task of finding a way forward now falls to the new Trump administration. As the U.S. Catholic bishops have previously stated, "Progress towards a global ban on antipersonnel landmines depends upon strong, unambiguous, and convincing U.S. leadership."

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# The Politics of Abortion Will Get More Complicated in 2017

## *Legal battles and culture wars, but little common ground*

Even before the election, 2016 had been a strange year for the politics of abortion. After that contest's surprising results, the upheaval is only more pronounced, and activists on each side are likely to underestimate the twists and turns of the road ahead. Both camps are ready to press their own advantages, but they do not yet seem to have developed plans for engaging voters on the opposing side.

The Republican primaries elevated Donald J. Trump, a recent convert to the pro-life cause who showed little familiarity with the contemporary movement, as the political champion of opposition to abortion, though he did not prioritize the issue in his campaign. Meanwhile, the Democrats nominated Hillary Clinton, the only candidate in history to receive a presidential primary endorsement from Planned Parenthood. Abortion issues were a significant focus of her campaign, with the party platform calling for the repeal of the Hyde Amendment, a 40-year-old compromise forbidding the use of government funds for abortions.

With Clinton's victory predicted by almost all major polling outfits, pro-choice activists appeared poised for momentous gains. The Democratic Party consensus moved strongly toward destigmatizing and expanding abortion access, buoyed by the Supreme Court's ruling in *Whole Woman's Health v. Hellerstedt* earlier this year. And with Mr. Trump at the helm of the Republican Party, some conservatives worried the pro-life movement was doomed to suffer profound setbacks.

Then the election happened. Mr. Trump's upset win seems to have ignited new fervor in pro-life activists around the country, encouraged by his opportunity to shape the Supreme Court. Mr. Trump has signaled his intention to appoint justices who would be amenable to overturning *Roe v. Wade*, which would return decisions about the legality of abortion to each state.

But pro-life activists are not waiting around for a case to make its way to the Supreme Court. Following the election, Ohio state legislators passed a bill that would limit legal abortion to only about the first six weeks of pregnancy, or before the fetal heartbeat could be heard. Though Ohio's Gov. John Kasich vetoed that measure, nicknamed the "heartbeat bill," he signed into law a 20-week limitation in December. Efforts to defund Planned Parenthood, both as part of the promised repeal of the Affordable Care Act and from Medicaid at the state level, have been renewed.

Legislators in pro-life states sense that the winds have changed in their favor. As Mr. Trump appoints justices and pro-life advocates size up their chances, state legislators might begin designing laws with the specific intent of placing the matter before the Supreme Court. If their efforts are successful, the pro-life movement could score the win it has been angling for over the last several decades.

But the solidity of any new pro-life legal tilt is still years from being established. Meanwhile, the pro-choice movement, though perhaps facing political disadvantages, shows

no signs of backing down—especially when it comes to claiming the cultural high ground for their position. The actress Lena Dunham recently said on a podcast that though she has not had an abortion, "I wish I had," so that she could contribute her personal story to the effort to reduce the stigma around abortions. In that same vein, Harvard University Press will publish Carol Sanger's *About Abortion* next year; the book's aim, according to the publisher, is "to pry open the silence surrounding this public issue." Ms. Sanger argues that the stigma surrounding abortion is a significant obstacle to activists looking to expand abortion rights, and it is likely that the movement to diminish any social consequences of abortion will continue to grow as a form of backlash to whatever pro-life accomplishments may be on the horizon.

Thus, it appears likely that pro-life activists will spend the next few years waging a legal war against abortion, while pro-choice activists mount a renewed culture war in an attempt to undercut the energy behind those efforts. With few pro-life voices or think tanks producing arguments in favor of their position in mainstream culture, it is difficult to imagine how pro-lifers will push back against the abortion destigmatization effort. Likewise, it is not clear what success, if any, pro-choice advocates will have in the legal arena.

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Elizabeth Stoker Bruenig, a contributing writer for *America*, writes about Christianity and politics; Twitter: @ebruenig.

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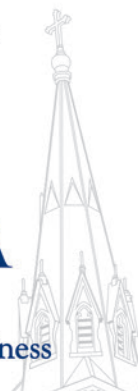
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U.S. House Speaker Paul Ryan receives the gavel from House Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi during the opening session of the 115th Congress on Capitol Hill in Washington on Jan. 3. One third of the members of the new Congress are Catholic.

# CATHOLICS ON THE HILL

By Robert David Sullivan

Catholics will enjoy peak clout in Congress in 2017. Almost one-third of the membership is Catholic (see page 14), as are the leaders of both parties in the House, Paul Ryan, a Republican and Nancy Pelosi, a Democrat. Even the House chaplain is Catholic; Patrick J. Conroy, S.J. (see interview on page 34). In the Senate, two Catholic women—Susan Collins of Maine and Lisa Murkowski of Alaska—are among the most moderate members of the 52-to-48 Republican majority and are thus must-win votes in efforts to block appointments or legislative proposals from the new president, Donald J. Trump.

The pro-life movement may be one of the biggest beneficiaries as the Republicans take control of both the White House and Congress for the first time since 2007, but on other issues the power and the inclination of Catholic legislators are uncertain.

Several issues that Congress is likely to grapple with were mentioned in 2015's "Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship," the document released by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops 12 months before each presidential election. "Affordable and accessible **health care** is an essential safeguard of human life and a fundamental human right," the bishops wrote. Both Mr. Trump and Republican congressional leaders have vowed to repeal the Affordable Care Act, but what they might replace Obamacare with is uncertain. Many Catholic leaders would welcome a change to the act's mandate that, with few exceptions, employers must provide health plans that cover contraceptives. But other aspects of the law, like the ban on denying coverage because of pre-existing conditions, are more popular.

The bishops also support "measures to strengthen **Medicare and Medicaid**." Speaker Ryan instead proposes to "modernize" Medicare by changing it from a single-payer system to one in which seniors would have to choose from a range of private and public insurers. Mr. Ryan may find more support for his proposal to shift federal Medicaid spending into **block grants** that states may spend as they see fit; he has described such measures as compatible with the Catholic concept of subsidiarity, or, as he wrote in **America**, "a prudent deference to the people closest to the problem."

U.S. Catholic leaders have also backed proposals to increase the federal minimum wage, which has been at \$7.25 since 2009. Mr. Ryan and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell have opposed an increase for years; Mr. Trump has been inconsistent on the issue. But a week after the election, Rick Santorum, a Catholic and a former Republican senator from Pennsylvania, urged "a modest increase in the **minimum wage** to help hardworking families, particularly those...that put their faith in the prospect of a President Trump."

It seems unlikely that the Trump administration and the Republican majority in Congress will agree to **immigration reform** that would allow undocumented residents to attain citizenship. Nor is the new power line-up in Washington expected to be friendly toward policies to **mitigate climate change**—though state governments may continue moving away from coal and toward renewable-energy sources.

Whatever happens with other issues, the Trump administration seems to be on the same page as the Catholic Church on **abortion**. The

new president has promised to make pro-life appointments to the Supreme Court, and the new Congress seems amenable to ending federal funding for Planned Parenthood and making the Hyde Amendment, which prohibits federal tax money from going toward abortions, into permanent law.

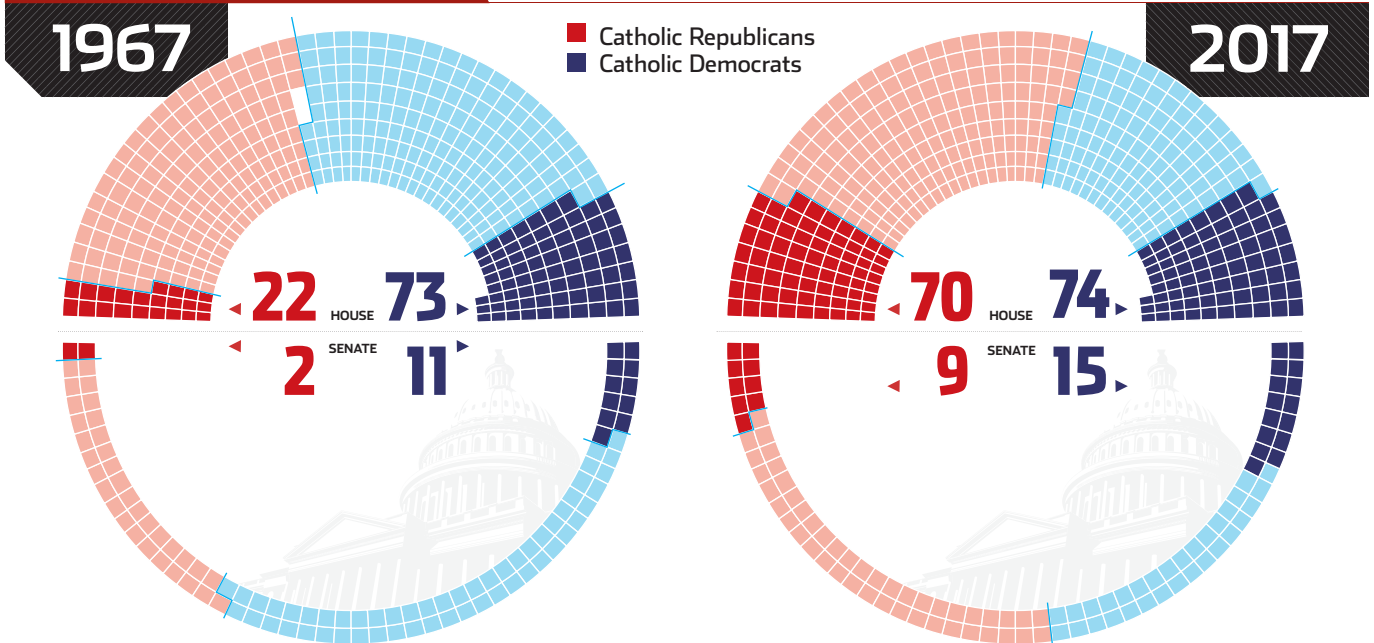
These changes are due more to the unified Republican control of federal government than to increased Catholic representation in Congress. A few decades ago, there was

a large number of pro-life Democrats, but in the last Congress only two Democratic representatives and one Democratic senator received ratings above 50 percent from the lobbying group National Right to Life.

In fact, Catholics are no longer a unified bloc, either in the electorate or in Congress. Simple partisanship has become the force that explains almost all action on Capitol Hill.

Robert David Sullivan, *associate editor*; Twitter: @robertdsullivan.

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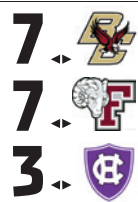
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**27 of 62**

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In 1967, more than three-quarters (77%) of Catholics in the U.S. House were Democrats, and 85% of Catholics in the Senate were Democrats. In 2017, the Catholic contingent is

### SPEAKERS OF THE HOUSE

Catholics have held the post for 36 of the past 55 years.

**6** OF **10** SPEAKERS OF THE HOUSE HAVE BEEN CATHOLIC



The first Catholic Speaker of the House was John McCormack (D-Mass), who first held the post in 1962. He was followed by:

Tip O'Neill (D-Mass), Tom Foley (D-Wash), Nancy Pelosi (D-Cal), John Boehner (R-Ohio) and Paul Ryan (R-Wis)

much more bipartisan: only 51% of Catholics in the House are Democratic, and 64% of Catholics (or 15 out of 24) in the Senate are Democratic.

Sources: The Brookings Institution, Pew Research Center, Association of Jesuit Colleges & Universities, Ignatian Solidarity Network, congressional members' offices



AP Photo/Felix Marquez

# Gas Hike Fuels Disorder Across Mexico

Social unrest swept across Mexico in early January as protests over a hike in gasoline prices escalated into acts of looting, riots and blockades of highways and petrol stations. Hundreds of people were arrested after ransacking stores and clashing with police on Jan. 5.

The protests further erode what little support the already deeply unpopular government of President Enrique Peña Nieto has left.

The unrest first erupted on New Year's Day, after the government announced a sudden increase in gasoline prices of up to 20 percent. Popularly called "gasolinazo," the price hike is a consequence of the government abandoning a decades-old scheme of deep gasoline and diesel subsidies as part of an energy reform package. But the gasolinazo coincided with rising global oil prices and it came just as gasoline scarcity struck stations across the country.

The sudden hike brought the anger and frustration over fuel scarcity to a boiling point. Angry protesters began blocking access to service stations, expressways and thoroughfares in dozens of major cities across the country. Lootings and gas theft soon followed. More than a thousand stores have been ransacked, causing millions of dollars in damages.

At least two looters in Veracruz state and a police officer who attempted to prevent gas theft in Mexico City died in the mayhem. As panic over the possibility of violence spread on social media in the capital, the army began

patrolling certain neighborhoods on Jan. 4 to maintain order.

"I know there is much annoyance and anger because of this situation. Those are feelings I understand," Mr. Peña Nieto said on Jan. 5 in his New Year's address to the nation. "But trying to maintain the artificial price of gasoline would have forced us to cut social programs, raise taxes or increase the country's debt, placing at risk the stability of the economy as a whole."

But Mexicans have not forgotten that they were promised cheaper gas and electricity prices. The exact opposite is happening. Other basic goods and services, such as food and public transportation, are also expected to become more expensive this year.

The protests have energized the leaders of grassroots and social movements, who hope to channel the popular anger into achieving political change. Interviewed on Jan. 6 by the website SinEmbargo.com, Bishop Raúl Vera of Saltillo called for a "new social pact" in Mexico.

"We first need a real political pact that would guarantee to the nation that it would be a truly representative democracy, because right now it's not even that," Bishop Vera said. "How are the thugs who approved the energy reform going to represent the country?"

Masked men stand guard in front of a gas station in Veracruz, Mexico, on Jan. 7. A 20 percent hike in gasoline prices provoked days of looting across the nation. While looting has subsided, residents in affected communities have taken to guarding properties themselves.

Jan-Albert Hootsen is *America's Mexico City* correspondent; Twitter: @Jayhootsen.



# U.S. Bishops Support Legislative Bridge For 'Dreamers'

Since the campaign's end, President-elect Donald J. Trump has softened his tone on immigrant deportations, but his final plans remain unknown. The "Bar Removal of Individuals Who Dream and Grow Our Economy [Bridge] Act," introduced by Senator Lindsey Graham, Republican of South Carolina, and Senator Richard Durbin, Democrat of Illinois, is intended to shore up the status of undocumented young people regardless of the policies ultimately adopted by the incoming administration.

In a letter to the U.S. Senate on Dec. 22, Bishop Joe Vásquez, chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Migration, supported the legislation and its goal to shield from deportation hundreds of thousands of young people now living in the United States. The act would also offer employment authorization to young people registered under the Department of Homeland Security's Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program.

Under current law many so-called Dreamers, young adults without documentation who came to the United States as children, are technically subject to deportation to home countries and cultures they may have never known, protected only by the Obama administration executive order that created DACA.

In his letter Bishop Vásquez points out that "there are more than 740,000 young people who have received and benefitted from DACA. They are contributors to our economy, academic standouts in our universities, and leaders in our parishes."

"As Catholics, we support DACA, as we believe in protecting the dignity of every

human being, especially that of our children. These young people entered the U.S. as children and know America as their only home."

By some estimates as many as one million more Dreamers are eligible for DACA but have not applied for it. Many undocumented young people refrained because they were concerned the DACA database could be used to locate them for deportation after the close of the Obama administration.

The Bridge Act would put DACA recipients into a new type of status, "provisional protected presence," that would last for three years from enactment. Applicants would be required to pay an application fee and pass a criminal background check and clear security vetting. They would also have to meet a number of eligibility criteria indicating that they came to the United States as minors, grew up in the United States and pursued an education.

Speaking on behalf of the U.S. bishops, Bishop Vásquez, who leads the Diocese of Austin, Tex., vowed in his letter to work with Congress and the new administration "to reform our immigration system in a humane and common-sense manner."

"While we endorse the Bridge Act and support DACA youth," he wrote, "we note that DACA and the provisional protected presence status in the measure are temporary substitutes for larger legislative reform of our immigration laws that our country so desperately needs."

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





## 2016 Surge in Chicago Gun Violence

Chicago experienced a level of gun violence unseen in nearly two decades in 2016, enduring 762 homicides—a 57 percent surge over 2015. Several hundred demonstrators, including some of the family members of those killed in the city last year, took to the street on the last day of a dreadful year, demanding justice for their loved ones and calling for an end to the violence. The Rev. Michael Pflieger, pastor of St. Sabina's Parish on Chicago's South Side, joined the Rev. Jesse Jackson in leading the march down the Magnificent Mile, the city's high-end shopping strip on Michigan Avenue. Each of the participants carried wooden crosses bearing the names of victims. Speaking into a bullhorn, Father Pflieger said that while the crosses were heavy, "there is a much heavier weight in the hearts of these family members" mourning the loss of loved ones. Much of the violence is confined to poorer neighborhoods. Holding the march downtown, in the shadows of retailers such as Neiman Marcus and Cartier, was an effort to remind city leaders that violence is not a "South Side problem" but "a Chicago problem," Father Pflieger said.

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

“

*Dreamers, young adults without documentation who came to the United States as children, are technically subject to deportation to home countries and cultures they may have never known.*

Bishop Robert W. McElroy of San Diego speaks with Archbishop Francisco Moreno Barrón of Tijuana, Mexico, through the border fence in San Diego during the 23rd Posada Sin Fronteras (Posada Without Borders) on Dec. 10.



Michael O'Loughlin



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AP Photo/Eduardo Verdugo

# BEYOND



President Donald J. Trump's journey to the White House began with a simple promise. "I will build a great, great wall on our southern border," he announced in June 2015, when few took the hotel mogul's presidential ambitions, or chances, too seriously. "And I will have Mexico pay for that wall. Mark my words."

Mr. Trump himself would temper those words shortly after his election—"for certain areas...there could be some fencing," he said in an interview on "60 Minutes" on Nov. 13. But ultimately it does not matter whether it is a great wall or just a really long fence. If he builds it, they will still come.

They will come from Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador, where a deadly mix of poverty, violence and corruption leaves families with no other option but to flee north. They will pay a *coyote* anywhere from \$5,000 to \$14,000 for three chances to roll the dice and make it across the border. They will risk extortion, kidnapping and rape on the 2,500-mile trek north, many riding atop *la bestia*, a train overflowing with other migrants, or fighting for air in the back of a crowded truck.

When the road ends, they will walk for miles in the punishing desert heat of northern Mexico, dodging Border Patrol agents, cartels and American vigilantes until the lucky ones cross undetected into the United States. Some will not make it out of the desert alive. The rest will be detained and flown back to their country of origin at an average cost to U.S. taxpayers of \$12,500 each.

*Stories from the other side  
of the immigration crisis*

By Ashley McKinless

## The Revolving Door

I am standing in an empty deportation processing center in Guatemala City, where migrants returned from the U.S. border are welcomed, registered and sent on their way back into the country they had planned to leave behind. Cameras and recording devices are prohibited, and I am told not to initiate any conversations with the returnees, some of whom may be traumatized by their sudden reversal of fortune after traveling so far and coming so close to the finish line. The nondescript brick building is tucked into the corner of the national air force base at La Aurora International Airport. Inside, it feels like a high school cafeteria, complete with brown-bag lunches on white folding chairs. An elevated wooden counter and 12 aging computers at the front of the room suggest D.M.V.-level wait times ahead. Upbeat marimba music blares discordantly from above like a forced laugh.



A large sign behind the counter reads: “Ya estás en tu país and con tu gente”—“You are now in your country and with your people.” It is a bittersweet welcome for many of the returning migrants, who say they love their country and would have stayed in Guatemala if they could have.

A football field away the returnees start leaving the plane. First 10 or so women and girls, walking in threesomes and pairs. Then a much longer line of men, young and old, make their procession across the tarmac. As they enter the building, some flash a wide, confident grin or wear a sheepish smile. Many look stoically ahead; others, exhausted and visibly upset, study the floor. More than a few are still wearing the white T-shirts they were given at detention centers in the United States. For security reasons, shoelaces and belts are not allowed. The chains and shackles that had bound them on the plane have been removed.

One hundred sixty-two Guatemalans fill the white folding chairs. Three or four times a day, four or five days

a week, flights carrying as many as 260 returnees arrive at the base. Those numbers bear witness to the scale of the migrant crisis, though the scene is not entirely somber. Once everyone is seated, there is an animated call-and-response between the peppy representative from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the returning migrants.

“Thanks be to God because we are all alive when so many do not make it,” she tells them. “Don’t think of yourself as losers. You took a risk.” Some roll their eyes, others cheer. It is clear that many of them have been through this routine before.

That includes Miguel, 30 years old with a sturdy build and quiet voice, who is eager to tell his story. He says he first left for the United States in 2000 at the age of 14 because there were no jobs in his small town in the north of Guatemala. He wound up in White Plains, N.Y., working as a landscaper for nine years. Six years ago, he returned to Guatemala to care for his ailing father. After his father died, he and his girlfriend, pregnant at the time, again made their way north. She made it across the border; he did not.

Two failed border crossings and a year and a half later, he still has not met his child. He says he will try his luck at the border again—maybe tomorrow, maybe in a few months.

Mr. Trump has not detailed how he plans to stem the flow of this desperate exodus. But the revolving door of Guatemala’s deportation center makes one thing clear: A migration policy that begins and ends with fortifying the U.S. border is destined for expensive failure.

## Migrant or Refugee?

Few see the futility of a U.S. policy of wall-building more clearly than Mauro Verzeletti, C.S. The Scalabrini missionary, known to migrants and officials here as Padre Mauro, runs La Casa del Migrante, which provides returnees with a temporary place to stay, humanitarian assistance and psychological counseling. Every day he receives a schedule of the flight arrivals at Guatemala City’s airport and dispatches a white van to pick up returning Guatemalans who have nowhere else to go. Padre Mauro spends much of his time tending to the immediate needs of these new





Upwards of 70 percent of children in Guatemala's indigenous communities suffer from malnutrition.

arrivals, a ministry that he considers essential but merely a Band-Aid in the face of a migration crisis. What the country needs, he says, is for its leaders and the international community to address the conditions that push thousands of people like Miguel north every month.

The plight of Central American migrants and refugees briefly made front page news in 2014, when a surge in families and unaccompanied children overwhelmed the U.S. immigration system. While the alarm-raising headlines have dropped off, the number of unaccompanied children apprehended by the U.S. Border Patrol has not. In 2016, 18,914 Guatemalan youths were picked up—almost 2,000 more than the 17,057 apprehended two years prior.

North of the border, political debate has centered on whether these families and children should be considered economic migrants, who are subject to deportation, or refugees, who can claim a legitimate right to asylum. But such neat categories are not reflected in the lives of most Guatemalans, says Padre Mauro. Poverty and violence, past and present, are deeply intertwined in the country.

Like other countries in the region, Guatemala experienced a devastating, decades-long civil war between U.S.-backed military authoritarians and leftist rebels who drew their support from the indigenous Mayan community and the rural poor. The war ended in 1996, but patterns of exclusion and discrimination persist.

In 1993, Virginia Searing, S.C., came to Quiché, a re-

gion devastated by the government's scorched-earth policy, to establish a mental health program for victimized communities. She says parents and grandparents in the area "saw their loved ones burned alive, macheted, tortured, raped.... They pass that on. How does a person live having experienced that?"

This unaddressed trauma, as well as impotent rage toward an economic system that still rewards the rich and the corrupt, Sister Searing says, is all too often expressed in the form of sexual violence, family abandonment and domestic and child abuse. Is a mother fleeing with children that she cannot feed, from a husband who abuses her, truly a migrant? Or is it more accurate to call her a refugee?

For decades, the United States has promoted neoliberal policies as the best economic response to this deadly mix of poverty and violence. Meanwhile, they have directed foreign assistance to state security forces with shaky human rights records. The Central American Free Trade Agreement, signed in 2004, promised to bring jobs to the region and reduce migration to the United States. Instead, Padre Mauro says, Cafta enriched the oligarchs and multinational corporations and displaced small farmers. A decade later, Guatemala has a booming biofuels export industry—and the fourth highest rate of chronic malnutrition in the world. Fifty percent of children under 5 are malnourished, and the rate is even higher for indigenous populations.

Angelita, 18, demonstrates cupping at the Nuevo Eden farming cooperative in San Marcos, Guatemala.

Padre Mauro believes the U.S. response to the 2014 border crisis will bring more of the same.

The Obama administration threw its support behind the Alliance for Prosperity, a five-year, \$22 billion plan drawn up by the governments of Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador that aims to reduce incentives for migration by spurring private sector growth, strengthening the rule of law and combating gang- and cartel-driven violence. Roughly 60 percent of the funds are earmarked for policing and border security measures, and much of the development aid is focused on attracting foreign companies rather than investing in health, education and social security. These public services have been crippled by a culture of tax evasion among the country's businesses and elite.

What the 60 percent of Guatemalans living in poverty need, Padre Mauro insists, is access to “las tres T's: trabajo, techo, tierra” (“the three L's: labor, lodging, land”). It is the formulation used by Pope Francis in a forceful address to the Second World Meeting of Popular Movements, a gathering of grassroots organizations of the poor and marginalized, in July 2015: “I wish to join my voice to yours in calling for land, lodging and labor for all our brothers and sisters. I said it and I repeat it: These are sacred rights.”

### A Future With Dignity

The small farm holders of Nuevo Eden, a coffee cooperative in San Marcos, a lush, mountainous district in Guatemala's western highlands, have been fighting for these rights for decades.

At the height of the civil war, families in the area fled to Mexico to escape atrocities perpetrated against indigenous Maya by military and paramilitary groups. Whole villages were razed, women were raped, families were gathered into churches and burned in a brutal campaign considered by many here a genocide. The community was in exile for 16 years, and when the war ended, it took another two years of organizing and strikes to force the Guatemalan government to hand over the money to buy back land promised in the peace accords.

That was not the end of their trials. Large dealers set the price for coffee beans. Turning a profit is difficult even in a good year. Then in 2012, *roya*—a fungus that because of climate change is reaching trees at altitudes once considered immune to the coffee leaf rust epidemic—wiped out 70 percent to 80 percent of their crop.

Production has bounced back, thanks in part to a

partnership with Catholic Relief Services, which in 2014 invested seed capital for rust-resilient coffee plants and introduced a community savings and lending program that helped farmers diversify their crops and improve cultivation techniques. But warming temperatures continue to push farmers in the area farther up the mountain. At some point, they will reach an altitude where even the most resilient seeds cannot take root.

What concerns these farmers most, however, is what the future will bring for young people in the region.

Young people like Angelita. At just 18 years of age, she is a volunteer firefighter, her community's de facto E.M.T. and a midwife—she has managed four deliveries so far. She is also a trained smoke-jumper, those fearless types who parachute into wildfires. She has studied literature and computers in high school, helps out her dad in the fields and her mom in the kitchen and plays soccer in her free time. She has a résumé and ambition that would make aspiring Ivy Leaguers look over their shoulders.

But, like most people under 30 here, she has no job and few prospects for further schooling. When her friends ask her why she does so much for no pay, she has a simple answer: “Es mi vocación”—to support her family, to strengthen her community, to build up her country is her vocation. And to listen to her talk is to know that if she had even the smallest opportunity, she would do all that and more.

Last summer, Angelita and some 20 other young people from surrounding communities were given the chance, with the support of C.R.S. and Caritas Internationalis, to travel to Guatemala City for a week-long training in cupping, a process to evaluate the aroma, flavor and body of coffee. These young people graduated from high school with degrees in teaching, business and computers, but they take pride in this new skill and want to share it with the cooperatives so that farmers can command a higher price for their harvest. But while a more competitive coffee product may benefit the community, it is not enough to provide the kind of formal employment young people desperately need if they are to stay in the region.

Angelita is one of 10 siblings; three of her four brothers are already living in the United States. Others in her community have also migrated or resorted to criminal







activity to support themselves and their families. Susana, another participant in the coffee cupping program, graduated with a teaching degree three years ago and still cannot find work. The few coveted teaching posts are given to the family members of government officials, she says.

Susana has told her parents that she plans to leave for the United States to help support her younger sisters. She says she will take whatever work she can get up north: “Harvesting tomatoes, washing, cooking. I’m willing to do that.”

Angelita has also been tempted to leave. But she cannot imagine leaving her family. She wants their strength and unity to be a model for their neighbors. “I’ve had obstacles in my life,” she says. But her father, a strong and loving influence, told her that whenever she encounters an obstacle, it means there is something good waiting beyond it.

### **The Way Out**

In his address in Bolivia, Pope Francis told the grassroots organizers that there is no simple solution, no single social program that will tear down the many obstacles—corruption, inequality, environmental degradation, war—holding back bright, ambitious young people all over the developing world: “Don’t expect a recipe from this pope.”

Much less from the president of the United States. “The future of humanity does not lie solely in the hands of great leaders, the great powers and the elites,” the pope said. “It is fundamentally in the hands of peoples and in their ability to organize.”

Guatemalans know this. The two phrases one hears most from those contemplating a way out of the country’s intractable cycle of corruption and poverty are “civil society” and “middle class”—neither of which can be built up with foreign aid alone.

But neither can the United States ignore the fate of the hundreds of thousands of people living with constant hunger, violence and economic despair beyond its border. Addressing another Meeting of Popular Movements, this time at the Vatican just days before the election of Mr. Trump, the pope offered a warning to those who would respond to the desperation of migrants and refugees by building walls: “There are so many cemeteries alongside the walls, walls drenched in innocent blood.”

Mr. Trump can build his wall. But they will keep coming. Until deported mothers and fathers like Miguel are reunited with their children in the United States, they will keep coming. Until aspiring teachers like Susana are able to use and pass on their education, until someone like Angelita is able to support herself and her family, they will keep coming.

Eventually, as Pope Francis observes, “All walls collapse—all of them.”

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Ashley McKinless, an associate editor of *America*, was awarded the 2016 Egan Journalism Fellowship by Catholic Relief Services. She traveled to Guatemala and Honduras with C.R.S. from Oct. 3 to 14. Twitter: @AshleyMcKinless.



Pope Francis with his personal secretary, Argentine Msgr. Luis Rodrigo Ewart.

# WALKING WITH PETER



A confident pope sets a new example  
for governing the church.

By Michael J. O'Loughlin

Taking a few steps is something most people take for granted. It is a fairly easy process at first thought, just one leg in front of the other. But the physical mechanics of beginning a journey are far more complex. Dozens of muscles must expand as others simultaneously contract, creating various tensions in the body that propel us forward. Though often viewed as something to be massaged away, tension is in fact a sign that we are alive.

If the church functions like a human body, as St. Paul claims, then it follows that within it there must be tensions.

Since the first days of his pontificate in 2013, Pope Francis has dealt with more than his fair share of tension in the church he was elected to govern. Those tensions have become more pronounced in recent months, as Francis tries to extend the center of global Catholicism away from Rome to the peripheries and implement reforms that his supporters say are long overdue.

Whereas popes of the distant past wielded temporal power as effectively as any king, Pope Francis' most potent tool is his example. The men he has appointed to be cardinals and bishops serve as models of the kinds of pastors he thinks the church needs. His many interviews and press conferences demonstrate his insistence that church leaders must connect with everyday Catholics. And his decision to bring out into the open once taboo topics shows that he wants the church to confront its challenges rather than continue to ignore them out of a mistaken, simplistic notion of unity.

The pope has invited his flock to walk alongside him as he seeks to reinvigorate the church. Taking the initial steps of what promises to be a long trek means tensions in the church are sure not to let up anytime soon. But Francis is unafraid, those close to him say, trusting that God is guiding him and all the faithful on this journey.

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I

**ON A CHILLY** November morning, 17 men draped in brilliant red robes stood before the imposing altar inside St. Peter's Basilica. Together, they pledged to be "constantly obedient to the Holy Apostolic Roman Church, to Blessed Peter in the person of the Supreme Pontiff."

Each man approached Pope Francis to receive a red hat, a ring and a blessing. They exchanged a ritual kiss with the pope and returned to their seats, now part of the most exclusive and powerful body in the Catholic Church. The

new cardinals then took time to greet scores of other cardinals who had witnessed the ceremony from nearby. The ritual is designed to send an unmistakable message: Under Peter we are all one.

But days before the ceremony, four cardinals made clear that church unity was, under Francis, elusive. These men, two of whom are in their 80s and no longer in active ministry or eligible to vote for the next pope, had written a letter to Pope Francis in September that read like a Gospel passage.

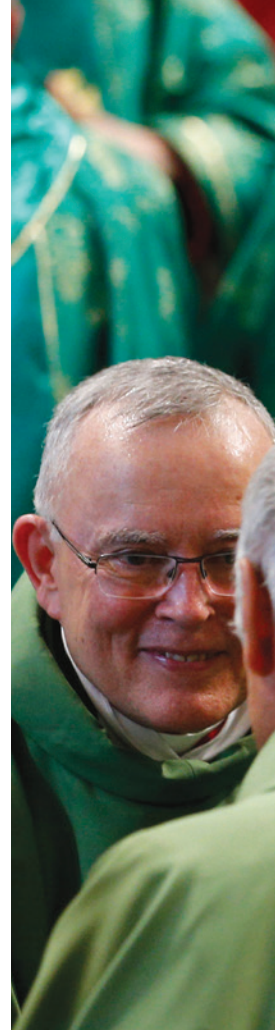
Teacher, they seemed to ask, if a man divorces his wife and the woman marries again, raises a family and continues to practice her faith, should she be welcomed to Communion, as you seem to suggest in your pastoral letter "Amoris Laetitia," or should we follow the rules set forward by your predecessor, St. John Paul II, which would prevent her from participating in the sacrament?

The letter, called a *dubia*, contains five yes-or-no questions. It was written to call into question ideas Pope Francis promulgated following a two-year consultative process with bishops from around the world that ended in October 2015. The pope did not respond directly to the cardinals, which has bothered some church traditionalists, but he has not exactly ignored their concerns either. In a homily a few weeks before the consistory—the ceremony in which new cardinals are created—the pope lamented the rigidity of some churchmen, which many have interpreted as a not-so-subtle jab at those criticizing his reforms.

"Let's pray for our brothers and sisters who think that by becoming rigid they are following the path of the Lord," Francis preached. "May the Lord make them feel that he is our Father and that he loves mercy, tenderness, goodness, meekness, humility. And may he teach us all to walk in the path of the Lord with these attitudes."

The prayer was Vatican-speak for, "Bless your heart," a phrase uttered with a smile by many Southerners when confronted during a tense encounter.

Then, speaking three days before Christmas to the Roman curia, Francis again made his case for reform, calling it "first and foremost a sign of life, of a church that advanc-





Archbishops Charles J. Chaput of Philadelphia, Joseph E. Kurtz of Louisville, Ky., and Paul-André Durocher of Gatineau, Quebec, at the opening Mass of the Synod of Bishops at the Vatican on Oct. 4, 2015.

es on her pilgrim way.” And he brushed off the criticism, noting that the “absence of reaction is a sign of death!”

Nearly four years into his pontificate and just after his 80th birthday in December, Francis continues to use a blend of consultative deliberations, confident decision-making and appeals directly to the Catholic faithful to drive his agenda. There are hints today that he may yet fail at reforming the church—insiders and traditionalists are emboldened because of efforts like the *dubia*—but Francis appears as determined as ever to move the church forward.

## II

**SYNODALITY**, widespread consultation with the greatest number of people from the far reaches of the church, is key to understanding how Francis governs.

Pope Paul VI established the synod of bishops in 1965, an institution designed to continue the collaborative ethos among church leaders that emerged during the Second Vat-

ican Council, one that harkened back to the earliest days of the church. But by the 1980s synods had become stultifying and routine, with little real work or dialogue breaking through the Vatican’s infamously rigid bureaucracy.

The mood inside the synod hall began to loosen up a bit in the mid-2000s, thanks in part to Pope Benedict XVI, who introduced happy hours after the dry plenary sessions had wrapped up. Bishops began to open up with one another over a drink.

Cardinal Joseph Tobin, the newly named archbishop of Newark who worked in the Vatican for several years under Pope Benedict XVI, said that previous synods often failed to live up to their stated goal of fostering dialogue. Cardinal Tobin, who was recently given a red hat by Francis, participated in three synods under St. John Paul II and two under his successor.

“It was a very clear process that didn’t allow for real reflection or questioning,” he told **America** during an interview at the motherhouse of the Redemptorist order in Rome. “Instead, and this is probably exaggerated language,

people were frog-marched to a conclusion.”

Pope Francis announced less than a year after his election that he would convene a special synod of bishops. Bishops would discuss family life, and nothing was off the table. The following October, in 2014, close to 200 bishops from around the world descended on Rome for the first part of the synod. They were tasked with crafting ideas to strengthen families, and that is what they spent most of their time considering.

But they also talked about the pain experienced by divorced and remarried Catholics who feel cut off from parish life. They considered how gay and lesbian Catholics and their families sometimes feel judged and ashamed. And they reflected on the complexities young couples face when discerning when to marry and how many children to have—all with the pope’s encouragement.

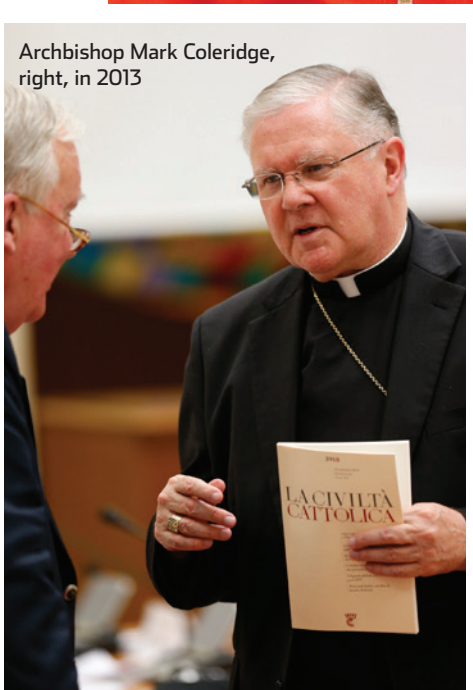
It was not business as usual.

Though most cardinals put on a face of unity when talking to the media circus, they could not conceal the tensions developing inside the synod hall. A draft document of the synod’s deliberations, which contained some of the most astoundingly positive language about gay people ever to come from inside the walls of the Vatican, was leaked to the press in order to undermine the deliberations, and the notion that divorced and remarried Catholics could receive Communion became a dividing line between reformers and traditionalists.

The synod concluded without clear consensus on the most sensitive topics and the pope asked the participants to return home and thoughtfully consider what had transpired. Another round of deliberations would take place in one year. To avoid shutting down the dialogue, Francis refrained from tipping his hand.

When the delegates returned, tensions remained high. At the start of the meeting, 13 cardinals signed a letter addressed to the pope suggesting that his synod was designed to lead to a predetermined conclusion rather than foster open dialogue. Some bishops felt that the proceedings had gone off track.

“About halfway through, I thought the synod was a com-



Archbishop Mark Coleridge, right, in 2013

New U.S. cardinals: Joseph W. Tobin, Kevin J. Farrell and Blase J. Cupich

plete and utter mess,” Archbishop Mark Coleridge of the Archdiocese of Brisbane, Australia, and a synod delegate, told **America** in a recent interview. “I couldn’t see where it was going or how it would get there.”

Archbishop Coleridge, who had worked in the Vatican’s secretary of state’s office under St. John Paul II, said that though he found parts of the synod “unnerving,” he never doubted that Francis had a plan.

Six months later, in April 2016, the pope released “*Amoris Laetitia*,” which summarized the findings of the synod process. In addition to describing the beauty of family life and the need for the church to support families more effectively, the pope also offered a suggestion on how to move forward on the Communion question.

He appeared to suggest that through a process of discernment and penance, in consultation with a priest, divorced and remarried Catholics who wished to receive Communion might be readmitted to the sacrament. The pope sought to move forward on the issue in a footnote, a signal that the teaching was not the main thrust of the letter. That a single footnote in a 325-paragraph document

Photos: CNS/Paul Haring

on family life is receiving the most attention is distressing to some Catholics.

Helen Alvaré, a lawyer and advisor to the U.S. bishops' conference who often writes on marriage and the family, told **America** that the outsized attention paid to the divorce question, and the lack of attention paid to other important family issues, is "heartbreaking." Further, she said, "the 'who's-up-who's-down-who's-out' coverage of the varying responses of bishops to A.L. is a missed opportunity to take A.L. and make it the Magna Carta of a new marriage focus for the church."

Still, the divorce question is one that has shaken up the church and offers a clue to where the pope intends to lead the faithful. So last September when bishops in Argentina released a more concrete framework for the process of opening up Communion, which was subsequently met with a papal nod of approval, it was the clearest indication to date that through the process of synodality, Francis is intent on refashioning church structures.

"The notion is, in this worldwide, global church, to put greater provision for governance in a less centralized manner, with a creative tension with the center," Cardinal Tobin said.

Ask difficult questions, deliberate with as many minds as possible and then make a decision. Take one more step

along the journey. Pope Francis may not know where the process will take him or the church, but he is confident that staying in one place is not an option.

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### III

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**MORE THAN 6,000 MILES** away from the Vatican, in sunny San Diego, Calif., about 125 Catholics spent the late summer months last year studying "Amoris Laetitia" and asking how the document could be best applied to the diocese's nearly one million Catholics.

Their task was set by Bishop Robert McElroy, who has earned a reputation as something of a policy wonk in the U.S. hierarchy. He spent most of his priestly career in his native San Francisco before being appointed to lead the Diocese of San Diego by Pope Francis in 2015.

Bishop McElroy is the type of leader Pope Francis said he wants as a bishop: A pastor who does not give in to the temptation to be a culture warrior but instead focuses on preaching the breadth of Catholic social teaching in the public square. Recognizing that something new was happening in Rome during the two synods of bishops, Bishop McElroy decided to follow the pope's lead and hold a similar meeting at home.

"When the pope talks so much about synodality, I



Bishop Robert McElroy, left, and delegates at San Diego's synod on "Amoris Laetitia," on Sept. 10

Photo courtesy of the Archdiocese of San Diego/Aida Bustos

thought, this could be a way of doing diocesan deliberation and pastoral planning in a way that's focused and that brings laypeople substantially and robustly into the process," Bishop McElroy told **America** during an interview at the November meeting of the U.S. bishops in Baltimore.

Having promised the delegates that their time would not be wasted and, barring any doctrinal errors, that their ideas would be implemented, Bishop McElroy was a bit nervous about where the synod would venture. The delegates read "Amoris" and considered how its lessons applied to local Catholics. The results surprised the bishop.

Take families experiencing separation. The military has a large presence in San Diego, and as a result, many families in that diocese endure long deployments that keep spouses and parents apart for long periods. "Amoris" talks about fragmented families, of course, but not necessarily in this way. Localizing the pope's universal message, San Diego Catholics said the church has to be better at offering resources to families separated by deployment.

Then there were L.G.B.T. issues, also considered at the Rome synods but reinterpreted through a local lens in gay-friendly California.

Gay people were not categorized as threats to marriage by most San Diego synod delegates. Instead, they said that gay and lesbian concerns should be considered in a wider framework of family spirituality, a surprising departure from the tone of much of the Catholic conversation about L.G.B.T. issues in recent years.

And when delegates were struggling to wrap their heads around the divorce and remarriage question—some of them were not comfortable with the idea of opening up Communion—one of the theologians on hand pointed to the model created by Argentine bishops and endorsed by the pope. The delegates said they wanted something similar in San Diego. But they also said the diocese should educate local Catholics about the Catholic tradition of conscience more broadly, going well beyond the divorce question.

Bishop McElroy accepted their recommendations, and in the coming months the diocese's administrative structures will be reorganized and priests will be trained to accompany those currently barred from the sacrament of Communion toward reconciliation.

"We're going to do what the pope's asked us to do, and I'm certainly going to do it because the people asked us to,"

Bishop McElroy said.

He acknowledged there is some tension in the church created by the pope's leadership style, but he said that at heart is a bigger issue that is not new in the church.

"It's an ecclesial question that goes to the heart of everything Francis tries to do: Does everything have to be centralized decision making?" he explained. "This is where there's a huge dispute."

"The fundamental question is, does everything have to be centralized so that everything will be uniform?" he said. "My answer is no."

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#### IV

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**STANDING ON THE ROOF** above the offices of the Italian Jesuit journal *La Civiltà Cattolica*, Antonio Spadaro, S.J., looks out at the dome of St. Peter's Basilica, the late afternoon sun low in the sky. For the past several months, Father Spadaro has kept a frenetic schedule, using every means of communication available to defend the pope from attacks from within and outside the church.

Both Pope Francis and Father Spadaro are Jesuits, and the order's emphasis on discernment guides the pope's style of governance. This can be disorienting to people who are used to a more top-down model of leadership or who still abide by Augustine's famous "Rome has spoken; the cause is finished" ethos.

"If the process is real, you don't know the end," Father Spadaro told **America**.

As he crisscrossed the rooftop, eager to point out the various Roman landmarks off in the distance, Father Spadaro compared the pope's governing style to a stroll through windy, cobblestone paths in an ancient city. Whereas people today rely on their G.P.S. devices to guide them to their destinations, with no meandering turns or surprise adventures, Francis is decidedly old school in his approach.

"You know the street, and how to walk along the street, because it feels inspired and guided by God," Father Spadaro said. "But Pope Francis doesn't know exactly where it's going. He learns and he understands things step by step."

Each step can cause tension for people who are anxious about the new route Francis is undertaking.

At the conclusion of the 2014 synod of bishops, Fran-







Pope Francis with Antonio Spadaro, S.J., on Feb. 12

cis talked about the disagreement inside the synod hall. Instead of expressing disappointment, however, he said he was heartened that bishops felt free to express themselves. Indeed, he would have been “very worried and saddened” had the bishops chosen a “false and quietist peace” over robust dialogue.

Archbishop Coleridge pointed to the pope’s 2015 remarks at a Vatican ceremony commemorating 50 years of synods in the postconciliar church. In that speech, Francis repeated his desire that consultation and dialogue become the norm in the church. He said those words helped him see how synodality can guide the church today. The archbishop said that Francis is intent on removing the mystique around the papacy that reached its apotheosis under St. John Paul II, whom some regarded “as a kind of oracle who could pronounce the last word on any given issue.”

“For Pope Francis, it’s more that he is part of a great conversation that belongs to the whole of the church,” he said.

“At times there’s a different kind of authority at work when it allows the discussion to run to a new stage,” he continued. “But I think it in no way diminishes the exercise of the Petrine ministry. If anything, it shows the truth, the power and the beauty of it more clearly.”

Turning to another interview to promulgate his ideas, this time with the Belgian Catholic newspaper *Tertio* in December, Francis described his synodal vision for the church.

He said, “Either there is a pyramidal church, in which what Peter says is done, or there is a synodal church, in which Peter is Peter but he accompanies the church, he

lets her grow, he listens to her, he learns from this reality and goes about harmonising it, discerning what comes from the church and restoring it to her.”

Francis said there would always be movement and dialogue in a synodal church—but that the pope would always be in charge.

“But there is a Latin phrase that says the churches are always *cum Petro et sub Petro*,” he continued. “Peter is the guarantor of the unity of the church. He is the guarantor.”

Moving forward is never easy. It can unsettle those used to the ways things are and have been. So it is unsurprising that Francis is facing some resistance. Still, Father Spadaro said critiques of the pope receive too much attention. After all, nearly all cardinals, save for a few, have voiced support for Francis. Most Catholics, Father Spadaro contends, are not bothered by internal church debates.

“If we read ‘*Amoris Laetitia*,’ it’s pretty clear what the pope intended to do: to install discernment inside the processes of the church,” he told *America*. “He’s trying to say to the pastors, your work is not just to apply norms as something like mathematics or theories. Your job is to look at the life of your people and to help them to discover God and to help them to grow in the church without excluding, without separating anyone from the Gospel and the life of the church.”

Father Spadaro considers a question about the pope’s overarching goals and concedes that there is no master plan. “He decides what to do by looking at events and praying, which means he doesn’t build big plans,” he said. “He goes step by step, step by step.”

Each of those steps, of course, is more complex than the pope might like, revealing tensions along the way. But that does not worry the pope, Father Spadaro said. “He’s aware of the risks, of course; but if the path is guided by God, you don’t have to feel troubled or anxious.”

As for those unsure of the style Francis has chosen in leading the church, Father Spadaro offers some advice: “You have to follow the direction that Peter is giving the church.”

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Michael J. O’Loughlin is the national correspondent for *America* and author of *The Tweetable Pope: Spiritual Revolution in 140 Characters*; Twitter: @mikeoloughlin.



# MAN OF THE HOUSE

*Patrick Conroy, S.J., became the 60th chaplain of the U.S. House of Representatives in 2011. He recently sat down with America, to talk about the place of faith in Congress.* Interview by Jeremy Zippie

***I imagine a lot of people are surprised to find out that Congress has a chaplain. Separation of church and state. That sort of thing.***

Establishing a chaplain was one of the very first acts of Congress, so a constitutional challenge to a chaplain would have to go back to the intent of the founders. When you talk about constitutional separation of church and state, well, the same people that wrote that were praying and hiring a chaplain to pray. That said, I am the second Catholic chaplain ever, but I am not the Catholic chaplain of the House. I am the chaplain of the House. My congregation, if you will, is not a Catholic congregation nor is it my intention that it be so. That's precisely what our Constitution stands for. If somebody were applying for this position and came in and said, "Well, my conscience and my ministry is about converting people to...." They are not going to get this job.

***What is the day-to-day like?***

Every day, the House opens liturgically. The House comes

to order, and it is a liturgy. I give the opening prayer. You can check it out on C-Span. I am available, and I try to go where members are gathered so that I can see them and they can see me. Back when I was a college chaplain, I used to eat in the student dining hall because that is where that would happen. Here it's being on the floor during votes.

***Where a lot of prayer is needed.***

Yup. A lot of prayer is needed.

***I heard that Pope Francis asked you for a prayer before his address to Congress.***

I knew I had all of about 20 seconds with him. I can speak a little Spanish, but I figured I would be starstruck, and what kind of a conversation can you have? In Spanish, I welcomed him to the Capitol—one Jesuit to another. He acknowledged that. Then I asked him if I could give him a blessing. That's how that happened. He is always asking people to pray for him, so I figured that was a pretty safe way to go.



*I will see two people talking and pray: ‘Lord, whatever that is, please bless that.’*



Before Pope Francis gave his historic address to a joint meeting of Congress on Sept. 24, 2015, Patrick Conroy, S.J., offered him a blessing.

***I imagine Pope Francis' visit was a highlight of this job. Any other moments of grace?***

Moments of grace would certainly include Pope Francis' visit. Everybody around the building that day was really in a pretty good mood. People wanted to put down the normal contentious stuff and share the experience of having a very popular and authentically religious person here. The guy has got it going. There is authenticity there that is so rare that when it arrives people respond to it. Every once in a while, there will be a member of Congress who stands up and says something noticeably powerful in a prophetic, non-political sense. I remember one day there was an issue being debated on the floor, and John Lewis, who led the Selma march, came to the floor to respond. The member on the other side withdrew his amendment, probably more out of respect for this man than for the issue. He is a holy man and a hero and a giant in our time in terms of moral leadership. It was kind of like, "If John Lewis is this upset about it, I probably don't need to do this."

***You are chaplain to people on both sides of the aisle in a rather contentious period of the history of this body. Do you see any signs of hope for cooperation?***

When I first arrived in 2011, people from the Democratic side never crossed over on the floor to speak with somebody on the Republican side, and I never saw anybody from the Republican side cross over and speak to someone on the Democratic side. Speak about anything. Anything. It was noticeable. Now that was in the wake of the Tea Party wave. Since then, that has really broken down. You find people that are actually talking to one another and some of them are not your usual suspects. The public doesn't get to see that. I get to see it. That is when my prayer takes place. I will see two people talking and pray: "Lord, whatever that is, please bless that. Don't even know what it is. Send your Spirit upon that conversation."

***Congress has a majority leader and a minority leader who are both Catholic. Is their faith something that is important to them? Are they authentically Catholic so far as you know them?***

I would say that Paul Ryan and Nancy Pelosi are very serious about being Catholic and being the best Catholics they can be. I would say that's true of most members of Congress in terms of their religious and political positions.



*I would say that Paul Ryan and Nancy Pelosi are very serious about being Catholic and being the best Catholics they can be.*

So avoid calling someone a “bad Catholic.” Have a bit of respect that these people aren’t just frivolous about their positions. They really, really do struggle with these things.

***Any behind-the-scenes insights into the lives of your “congregants” you could share?***

What I always try to do is describe what a Congressperson’s life is like. They come to Washington and for four days at a time are engaged in the contentious debate. Ten-hour days, 12-hour days. They work in a very toxic environment. When I say that, I am not saying politically toxic. I am saying humanly toxic. It is a toxic way to live. They go home to their office. Basically, these people are doing a highly tense and anxiety-producing daily chore without the comfort of family. Try to put a human face on these people that are easy to criticize and easy not to like, and just think how difficult the work that they have to do is. Then go ahead and be angry, because I understand that. I get it. It is easy to dump on them. But then, how about saying a blessing? “Lord, as angry as I am, bless these people with what they need to do the work that they have to do the best they can.”

***There is plenty of uncertainty around the new presidential administration. Any prognostications on how a Donald Trump presidency affects Congress?***

One hopes that both parties will be struggling to find out how they can work with Donald Trump. One hopes they will do that admirably and nobly and that the president-elect himself, having been called to a new office, will respond with the same hope and goodwill. My ministry does not change. I joke that I still pray for miracles every day. There are political observers out there who would say, “Well, we need it now more than ever.” But no, we have always needed it. I have great faith in the United States of America, in our way of proceeding. As awful as things might look to many, and some are justified, I have hope that God is with us.

Watch a three-minute video profile of Father Conroy based on this interview at [americamagazine.org/house-chaplain](http://americamagazine.org/house-chaplain).



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## “The object, scope and character of this review...” *America’s* debut editorial announcement

**When *America* was first published on April 17, 1909,** it replaced a monthly Jesuit periodical. At the time, John Wynne, S.J., the first editor in chief, explained that a monthly publication too quickly fell behind the rapid “march of events,” and that “until such time as a daily may be possible,” a weekly review focused on the intersection of faith and the issues of the day was needed.

Over 100 years later, ***America*** now publishes daily—even hourly—in digital form. Father Wynne promised that telegraph and cable would be used when needed to gather news; that same practicality has moved us to the web and shifted our print edition to biweekly publication. On all of our platforms, the mission announced in 1909 continues to inspire us today: to serve as “a bond of union among Catholics and a factor in civic and social life.”

The object, scope and character of this review are sufficiently indicated in its name, and they are further exhibited in the contents of this first number.

***America*** will take the place of the monthly periodical, *The Messenger*, and continue its mission. It is in reality an adaptation of its precursor to meet the needs of the time. Among these needs are a review and conscientious criticism of the life and literature of the day, a discussion of actual questions and a study of vital problems from the Christian standpoint, a record of religious progress, a defense of sound doctrine, an authoritative statement of the position of the Church in the thought and activity of modern life, a removal of traditional prejudice, a refutation of erroneous news, and a correction of misstatements about beliefs and practices which millions hold dearer than life. These needs, moreover, are too numerous, too frequent and too urgent to be satisfied by a monthly periodical, no matter how vigilant or comprehensive it may be. The march of events is too rapid, and every week has its paramount interests which are lost or forgotten, unless dealt with as soon as they arise.

In the opinion of many, a daily organ would be required to treat these interests adequately. Until such time as a daily may be possible, if really desirable, the weekly review we propose to publish is an imperative need....

There is still more need of a first-class Catholic weekly periodical in this Western Hemisphere, and a wider field of utility for the same than in England, because with us, non-Catholics as a rule are not only more ready to hear our views, but they are also more eager to have us exert our proper influence in the national and social life. When counselling Father Coleridge, at the time he was planning *The Month*, Cardinal Newman advocated a periodical which would induce Catholics to take an intelligent interest in public affairs and not live as a class apart from their fellows of other beliefs. His counsel applies to Catholics in America even more than it applied in England in his day. We are of a people who respect belief but who value action more. We are going through a period when the most salutary influences of religion are needed to safeguard the very life and liberty and equal rights of the individual, to maintain the home, to foster honesty and sobriety, and to inculcate reverence for authority, and for the most sacred institutions, civil as well as ecclesiastical. We are more responsible than our non-Catholic fellow citizens for the welfare of thousands of immigrants of our own religion who come to us weekly, and for their amalgamation into the national life. We are responsible also for much of the ignorance of religious truth and for the prejudices which still prevail to

# CALLING ALL STUDENT WRITERS!



## America Media is proud to announce the 2017 Generation Faith essay contest.

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America Media is seeking submissions from young writers for the 2017 Generation Faith essay contest. We want to hear from high school and college students interested in reflecting on the joys and challenges that come with living out (or struggling with) faith. All entries should be true personal essays, between 800 and 1,200 words. They should feature strong narratives and real-life examples from the writer's experience as a young person in the church today. Writers should think creatively and broadly about their faith experience.

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

Submit your entry to [americamedia.submittable.com](http://americamedia.submittable.com)

- ▶ Additional entries may be chosen for publication in America. The judging panel will consist of the editors of America and The Jesuit Post.
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- ▶ All entries must be submitted by 11:59 p.m. on March 3.



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a great extent, because, satisfied as we are of the security of our own position, we do not take the pains to explain it to others or to dispel their erroneous views.

The object, therefore, of this Review is to meet the needs here described and to supply in one central publication a record of Catholic achievement and a defense of Catholic doctrine, built up by skilful hands in every region of the globe. It will discuss questions of the day affecting religion, morality, science and literature; give information and suggest principles that may help to the solution of the vital problems constantly thrust upon our people. These discussions will not be speculative nor academic, but practical and actual, with the invariable purpose of meeting some immediate need of truth, of creating interest in some social work or movement, of developing sound sentiment and of exercising proper influence on public opinion. The Review will not only chronicle events of the day and the progress of the Church; it will also stimulate effort and originate movements for the betterment of the masses.

The name **America** embraces both North and South America, in fact, all this Western Hemisphere; the Review will, however, present to its readers all that interests Catholics in any part of the world, especially in Europe....

True to its name and to its character as a Catholic review, **America**

will be cosmopolitan not only in contents but also in spirit. It will aim at becoming a representative exponent of Catholic thought and activity without bias or plea for special persons or parties. Promptness in meeting difficulties will be one of its chief merits, actuality will be another. Its news and correspondence will be fresh, full and accurate. Courtesy will pre-

**“True to its name and to its character  
as a Catholic review, **America**  
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side over its relations with the press and other expounders of public sentiment. Far from interfering with any of the excellent Catholic newspapers already in existence, **America** will strive to broaden the scope of Catholic journalism and enable it to exert a wholesome influence on public opinion, and thus become a bond of union among Catholics and a factor in civic and social life.

The task of editing this Review has been undertaken at the earnest solicitation of members of the Hierarchy and of prominent priests and laymen.... It goes without saying that loyalty to the Holy See, and profound respect for the wishes and views of the Catholic Hierarchy, will be the animating principle of this Review.

The board of editors consists of men representing various sections of North America. They will be assisted by eminent collaborators and contributors drawn from all ranks of the clergy and from the laity in every part of the world....

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will supply prompt and correct information concerning Catholic interests. Telegraph and cable will be used when needed, and neither labor nor expense will be spared to make **America** worthy of its name.



## *Grace enough: Andrew Garfield on the Ignatian journey that led him through ‘Silence’*

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By Brendan Busse

► “Films were really my church,” Andrew Garfield, pictured here with the director Martin Scorsese, said of his childhood, “that is where I felt soothed, that is where I felt most myself.”

People make the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola for a variety of reasons. Preparing to play a featured role in a Martin Scorsese film is not one you hear often, but it's probably not the worst reason. Men and women often make retreats to find some clarity about who they are or who they're called to be. I suppose it was so for Andrew Garfield when he asked **America's** James Martin, S.J., to guide him through the Exercises as he prepared to play the lead role in Mr. Scorsese's new film, “Silence.”

Father Martin was hesitant at first. But Garfield was looking for something. Or someone. And that's not a bad reason at all. In the end, it was enough for Jim. And more than enough for God.

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It was a rainy day in Los Angeles when I had lunch with Garfield to talk about his experience of the Exercises. We met in a small bustling restaurant in Los Feliz, an old L.A. neighborhood that sits below the iconic Griffith Observatory just east of Hollywood. I was early. He was on time. We were both hungry.

Garfield seemed weary. It was just past noon when we met, and he was tired.

He had been working for weeks, promoting two movies, filming a third and preparing to return to London for an upcoming stage production. He carried a small collection of notebooks and a phone. Add a laptop and cup of coffee and you might have confused him for a grad student. It

was New Year's Eve, and he was having lunch with a spiritually curious Jesuit whom he had never met before. Not exactly the glamorous Hollywood life one would expect. More like an awkward religious blind date. I could appreciate the weariness.

Yet even in his fatigue he was exceedingly kind, generous with his time and thoughtful in his conversation. He made sure we were going to eat. He ordered the polenta, and I the blueberry pancakes. He was tired but grateful—grateful for the chance to recall his year-long experience of making the Exercises with Father Martin, grateful to get back into a place of greater depth and consolation than he was in at the moment—a place of Hollywood self-promotion. “This is like the marketplace of ‘riches, honor and pride,’” he said, referencing, unprompted, a key meditation from the Spiritual Exercises. It was a keen insight and a nice touch. He was speaking my language. He made me feel at home.

After getting to know one another briefly, we began to talk about how he came to acting as a vocation and what kind of spiritual experience he brought to the Exercises. “Films were really my church,” he said. “As a young kid it was movies and books; it was nothing remarkable really, just that is where I felt soothed, that is where I felt most myself...safest.”

Perhaps, as he noted, a childhood love of story is not that remarkable, but then he added something that seemed to me a very Ignatian insight: “In books and movies, I was transported into myself, into the vast in-

ner landscape of myself.”

St. Ignatius Loyola was similarly transported when he began writing the Spiritual Exercises. After a grave failure, wounded while foolishly trying to play the hero during a hopeless battle, with nothing like an endless newsfeed to occupy his time during a long and painful recovery, Ignatius began to read. He soon came to realize that the consolation he was looking for, the healing he needed, was not to be found in the fantasies of chivalrous fiction but rather in the lives of the saints. Moreover, he came to realize that a deeper and more satisfying life was being revealed not only in their saintly example but in the intricacies of his own passions. The wounded reality of his inner life became a place of graced imagination. Ignatius' conversion began when he became sensitive to the complexity of his own interiority.

In my conversation with Garfield, it became abundantly clear that he shares this Ignatian sensitivity. It was also clear that his “vast inner landscape” is, like many of ours, full of wounds and vulnerability. He knows well the longing for love, and at times, it is a torturous longing.

“I have been drawn to stories that are attempting to turn suffering into beauty,” he said. “I feel like I've been gifted and cursed with a closeness to some grief...the grief of living...” He paused as if gathering strength to say what he really meant, and then the source of the weariness I had sensed earlier was revealed: “...the grief of living in a time and a place where a life of joy and love is f--ing impossible.”

“I have been drawn to stories that are attempting to turn suffering into beauty,” Garfield said.

He repeated this thought at various moments in the few hours we were together. His life has been taken up by the burdens of love, by the possibility, or impossibility, of real love.

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Andrew Garfield was, for lack of a better word, successful in the Exercises. “There were so many things in the Exercises that changed me and transformed me, that showed me who I was... and where I believe God wants me to be,” he told me. That’s about as good a retreat outcome as one can hope for. And his success should not surprise us.

His training as an actor prepared him well for the dynamics of Ignatian prayer, whereby one imagines oneself within a series of biblical scenes in order to attain “interior knowledge” of God and to articulate that knowledge in a life of compassionate action and generous service. What was more surprising, what surprises him still, was falling in love.

When I asked what stood out in the Exercises, he fixed his eyes vaguely on a point in the near distance, wandering off into a place of memory. Then, as if the question had brought him back into the experience itself, he smiled widely and said: “What was really easy was falling in love with this person, was falling in love with Jesus Christ. That was the most surprising thing.”

He fell silent at the thought of it, clearly moved to emotion. He clutched his chest, just below the sternum, somewhere between his gut and his heart, and what he said next came out through bursts of laughter. “God! That was the most remarkable thing—

falling in love, and how easy it was to fall in love with Jesus.”

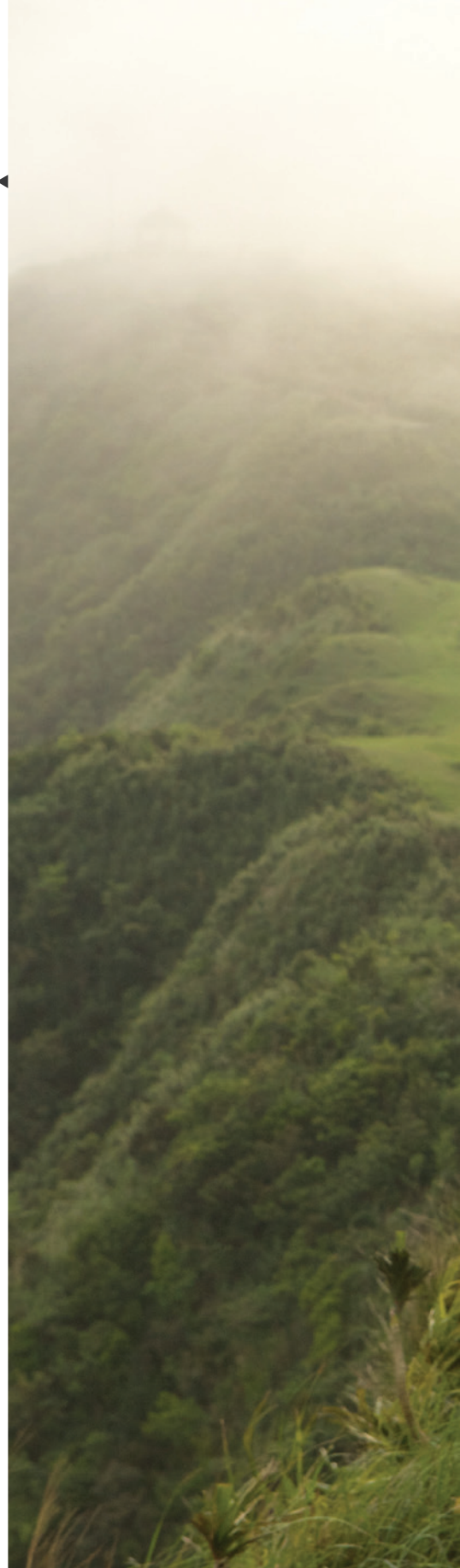
I suddenly came to appreciate the authenticity with which he experiences the joy of love and the sorrow of its frustration, the pain of its absence. “I felt so bad for [Jesus] and angry on his behalf when I finally did meet him, because everyone has given him such a bad name. So many people have given him such a s---f--ing name. And he has been used for so many dark things.”

When I say that Garfield was successful in the Exercises, it is exactly this profession of love that proves the point: He falls in love with Jesus. He suffers with and for the beloved. And his compassionate suffering is given over in a vocation that intends to help others into love and out of its absence. “That’s for me the beautiful agony of creating,” he continued, “the beautiful agony of never being able to fully express the possibility of love and the possibility of loving as he teaches, and living as he wants us to live. My compulsion to work is this longing to express that very thing.”

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The experience of falling in love with Jesus was most surprising, perhaps, because Garfield, like many people, came to the Exercises asking for something else. What he brought to the Exercises was not an explicit desire to know Christ but rather a painful and persistent sense of his own “not-enough-ness.”

Like Ignatius before him, Garfield was a young person looking for his own place in the world. And, like many of us, beneath this longing he





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*“There were so many things in the Exercises that changed me and transformed me, that showed me who I was...and where I believe God wants me to be.”*

carried a deep fear, a fear that he wasn't good enough. “The main thing that I wanted to heal, that I brought to Jesus, that I brought to the Exercises, was this feeling of not-enough-ness,” he said. “This feeling of that forever longing for the perfect expression of this thing that is inside each of us. That wound of not-enough-ness. That wound of feeling like what I have to offer is never enough.”

Many of us live with a fear of failure, but what we don't often realize is that it is not the failure that bothers us; it's the exposure. It's not hard to fail; we do it all the time. It's that people will see us failing. It's that we will be recognized as a failure that really pains us. When all we want is appreciation, being seen is what we long for; if we fear we're not worthy of it, it's being seen that terrifies us the most. This tension is something that Andrew Garfield understands very well.

The moment he remembers as the deepest experience of God's presence in his life happened just before his first public performance upon finishing drama school. He was to play Ophelia in Shakespeare's “Hamlet” at the Globe Theater in London. “It's about

two hours before and suddenly, I feel like I'm going to die,” he remembered. “I genuinely feel that if I step on the stage I'm going to burn up from the inside out. I've never felt so much terror, like mortal dread, not-enough-ness, self doubt. Terror at being seen. Terror at revealing and offering my heart. Exposing myself, saying, ‘look at me.’”

To calm his nerves he walked up and down the South Bank of the Thames. It was an overcast day and his thoughts turned to escape: “I begin thinking of throwing myself into the river. I have nothing to give, I have nothing to offer, I'm a fraud.” He understands it now as a moment of prayer: “I'm asking for something. I'm asking for help.”

And then he heard a street performer singing, rather imperfectly, a familiar song, “Vincent,” by Don MacLean. It was the imperfection of the performance that he remembers most. “If that guy had stayed in bed saying ‘I have nothing to offer, my voice isn't that good, I'm not ready to perform in public, I'm not enough.’ If he had listened to those voices, I wouldn't have been given what I needed,” he said. “His willingness to be vulnerable really changed my life. I think I understood for the first time how art makes meaning, how art changes people's lives. It changed my life.”

This shared moment of artistic imperfection saved him: “And literally the clouds parted and the sun came out and shone on me and this guy and I was just weeping uncontrollably. And it was like God was grabbing my by the scruff of the neck and saying, ‘You've been thinking that if you go on stage you're going to die. But actu-

ally, if you don't you're going to die.’”

He has lived ever since with this same creative tension—with a deep fear of being seen and an even deeper need of it. If it is being seen in our imperfection that terrifies us, it is being held in our vulnerability that will redeem us.

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Among the most moving parts of the Exercises for Garfield were the contemplations on the so-called “hidden life” of Jesus. “That felt very important,” he recalled. “Where I'm tempted constantly to be producing, to be seen, to be appreciated, etc., I was shown the beauty of living a hidden life, of retreating in order to offer myself in a deeper way to my art, to my life, to the world.” Considering his evident discomfort with the trappings of celebrity, an attraction to a hidden life is not surprising. And yet, these meditations on the childhood of Christ also revealed a desire to enter into the hidden parts of his own life—into his wounds of not-enough-ness, into the desolate places we all carry with us, but don't often find a way into or out of.

Yet perhaps the most critical exercise for Garfield was not about the hidden life, and not about his own woundedness, but rather about something sacred being revealed, about the vulnerability of God. During the meditation on the Nativity, he imagined himself, as Ignatius recommends, a nurse during the birth of Christ: “I felt at home there. I felt like that was where I was meant to be. In service of this woman doing this profound act.” He began to appreciate how the antidote

to humiliation might just be humility. “God, I wish I could feel like that all the time, in humble service,” he said. “If I can make storytelling a service, if I can be of service, and be as humble as I possibly can while doing it....” He loses himself again in the memory of the moment. And I don’t blame him. This is no small thing.

Actors have been understood as midwives from the beginning of time. The actor, as with all priestly people, stands before the truth and participates in its telling by way of their words and gestures, by enacting our sacred stories of redemption and love. In contemplating the birth of Christ, Garfield came to know something that other midwifing actors and mystics have known for a long time—that it is by our personification of love, by our humble service, that we become the love for which we long.

The experience of the Exercises is sacred because it is a place where we come to know the truth of love, where the personification of love is revealed in Christ. Feeling yourself participate in the labor of birthing into the world the love you long for is a mystical moment for any of us. It is not easy. It is in every sense an exercise and more. But it is without a doubt the greatest gift.

Yet this midwifing of love into the world does not excuse us from the pain of labor. It is not the possibility of love that remedies its impossibility, but rather, it is the personification of love that redeems us in the end. It is the labor of love that saves us. It is, in every sense, a work in progress.

“I was brought to my knees by these Exercises,” Garfield said, “and yet I sit here before you, struggling

with the same s---. The act of making the film was secondary to the act of going through the Exercises, and the act of the film coming out is third to those things...and the depth of experience follows suit. The depth of the experience of the Exercises was enough. And then making the film felt very, very deep, deeper than any other artistic experience I’ve ever had, but it wasn’t as deep as the experience of the Exercises, but it was still by all intents and purposes very damn deep. And now the film is coming out and I’m back in Shallow-ville. And I’m trying to reconcile that.”

Staying in love is not easy, just as staying in the graceful space of a retreat or a moving moment of prayer is not easy. The world comes back to us and we to it. But when I asked whether he still trusts the authenticity of his falling in love, he smiled again, made eye-contact and assured me: “Oh my goodness...this, this was enough. If I hadn’t made the film that would’ve been fine. But the one experience that I wouldn’t want to sacrifice, if I had to choose...it would have been going through those Exercises. It brings me so much consolation. It’s such a humbling thing because it shows me that you can devote a year of your life to spiritual transformation, sincerely longing and putting that longing into action, to creating relationship with Christ and with God, you can then lose 40 pounds of weight, sacrifice for your art, pray every day, live celibate for six months, make all these sacrifices in service of God, in service of what you believe God is calling you into, and even after all of that heart and soul,

## Poem Ending With a Sentence From Jacques Maritain

By Christian Wiman

It was the flash of black among  
the yellow billion.

It was the green chink on the  
chapel’s sphere.

It was some rust or  
recalcitrance in us  
by which we were by the grace  
of pain more here.

It was you, me,  
fall and fallen light.

It was that kind of  
imperfection through which  
infinity wounds the finite.

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Christian Wiman’s selected poems, *Hammer Is the Prayer*, is just out from Farrar, Straus and Giroux. He teaches at the Yale Institute of Sacred Music.

“Making the film felt very, very deep, deeper than any other artistic experience I’ve ever had,” said Garfield, pictured here in “Silence” with Yōsuke Kubozuka.

that humble offering...that humility... even after all of that someone is going to throw a stone and dismiss it. It’s a wonderful wonderful grace to be given, to be shown. And it’s a huge consolation to know that no matter how hard I work someone is not going to like me. There is going to be at least one person that says that I’m worthless. It’s wonderful!”

If Garfield seemed weary when we first met, he’s far from weary now. As he recounts these graces received he is visibly joyful, laughing out loud. Even as he acknowledges that some will think him “worthless” he seems radiant and free.

“This is my sincere prayer,” he said. “I’m praying that I’m freer to offer myself vulnerably...and that these other voices, whether they’re internal or external, don’t have the same power over that flame, over the ability to offer that purest, vulnerable, cracked open heart...in service of God, in service of the greater good, in service of love, in service of the divine. I feel like this is what God is showing me. And it hurts when I feel misunderstood or not seen...but I’m longing for it to hurt less so that I can keep offering myself vulnerably.”

At their core the Spiritual Exercises are about the personification of love, not the possibility of it. The possibility of love, or its impossibility, paralyzes us. But the personification of love, the vulnerable, wounded, beaten love that I saw in the heart of Andrew Garfield, the personification of love that he experienced as a midwife to Mary, the love he guards in his “hidden life,” the love that lives in his longing to be seen deeply and appre-

ciated fully, the falling in love that he continues to struggle with in his own relationships to God and others—that personification of love is what redeems us all in the end. If the impossibility of love leaves us longing, it is in the personification of love that we will find our satisfaction. It is in the personification of love where we will discover our enoughtness.

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When I arrived back to Madrid, I noticed again, as if for the first time, a paperweight that my father had given me a year ago on my birthday. It is a simple aluminum block that reads in bold letters, “I AM ENOUGH.” This seems to be the grace that God had in mind for Andrew Garfield, the grace all parents want for their children: that we might come to know ourselves as nothing more or less than the personification of their love. And that this knowledge be enough. It is the final prayer Ignatius recommends we make in the Exercises: “Take everything, God. Give me only your love and your grace. That is enough for me.”

Brendan Busse, S.J., a contributing writer for *America*, is currently studying theology in Madrid, Spain; Twitter: @bugideas.

[Read a review of ‘Silence’ and watch an interview with director Martin Scorsese at \[americamagazine.org/america-silence\]\(http://americamagazine.org/america-silence\).](#)





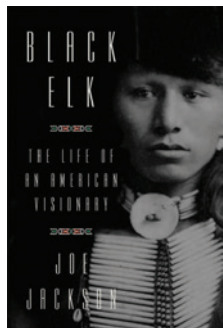


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Photo: Marquette University Archives

## The Native American holy man who did not surrender all to the Jesuits



**Black Elk**  
The Life of an  
American Visionary  
By Joe Jackson  
Farrar, Straus and  
Giroux. 624p. \$30  
By Thomas Powers

The true ordeal of the Teton Lakota, the warrior tribe that whipped the U.S. Cavalry in several notable fights in the 1870s, began after the shooting stopped. Worse than the persistent hunger was the federal effort to “civilize” the Indians by stages into hat- and trouser-wearing farmers with one wife, Christian first names, fixed last names and children who learned English in school. But the authorities had one aim above all others—to end the ancient practice of smoking a tra-

ditional pipe with a mixture of tobacco and the inner bark of the red willow before calling out to the ultimate power behind all things addressed by Lakota as Tunkashila. The Lakota resisted all of these changes but clung to nothing more tenaciously than the pipe.

The Oglala holy man and healer known as Black Elk, who is the subject of an illuminating new biography by Joe Jackson, once said that Lakota used *tunkashila*, which means grandfather, as a sign of respect and intimacy. The word is not the name of God, who has no name in traditional Lakota religion but is simply described as Wakan Tanka, translated by convention into English as Great Spirit. But *wakan* is a heavily freighted word. It means spirit in the sense of immaterial, large, eternal and everywhere, but it also means ancient, unknowable, mysterious and powerful.

The Lakota *wakan tanka* in some particulars resembles the traditional Judeo-Christian-Muslim God—who knows everything, can be reached by prayer—but was held in suspicion by the Christian churches that established themselves on the Lakota reservations in South Dakota. To defend the primacy of the Bible the churches persuaded the federal authorities by the early 1880s to impose a Code of Indian Offenses with reservation courts to try, convict and punish offenses that were all religious or cultural in nature. Outlawed for the next 50 years were the sun dance, traditional medicine, use of a sweat lodge for purification, plural marriages and dispersal of personal property at death in a ceremony known as a giveaway. Officials intended to extinguish every aspect of Indian culture root and branch, starting with native languages.

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◀ What will 2017 need most? Your love. Your mercy. Your compassion. Your care for the poor. And your commitment to stand for all these virtues  
@JamesMartinSJ

▶ Couldn't agree more with @CokieRoberts. More bourbon necessary but not sufficient to fix Congress. Women needed too.  
@AshleyMcKinless



◀ For a member of Congress a 90% chance of reelection as opposed to 95% is reason to flat-out panic.  
@RobertDSullivan

▶ @BuzzFeed's The Weight of James Arthur Baldwin by Rachel Kaadzi Ghansah is great example of how 2 write on Baldwin.  
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Both witness and victim of this long ordeal was the Oglala Black Elk, who took the Christian name of Nicholas, became a Catholic in about 1904 and served as a catechist until 1930, when his life took a dramatic turn recorded by Joe Jackson in a book that is not only an exhaustive biography but the best account we have of what it meant for Northern Plains Indians to see their children stripped of everything their fathers had believed. Both sides of this story are included—the religion Black Elk tried to preserve and the battle for his allegiance waged by Jesuit priests who felt betrayed by his late-life return to the old ways.

The struggle began in 1930, when Black Elk at 67, fearing that traditional pipe religion would die with him, elected to tell the Nebraska poet John Neihardt about the central religious experience of his life—an elaborate vision he had experienced when he was 9 years old. Neihardt devoted the longest chapter of his book, *Black Elk Speaks*, to this vision, which has poetic splendor but is not easily summarized. At the heart of it is an account of the religious crisis faced by the Lakota people and of the charge placed upon Black Elk personally by the Six Grandfathers to restore the sacred hoop of life and the flowering tree at its center. Black Elk described all of it in a non-stop, three-week interview with Neihardt.

When *Black Elk Speaks* was published in 1932, the holy man's vision was the big, central thing, followed by a more conventional account of his role in the major episodes of Oglala Lakota history, from his birth in 1863 through the massacre known as Wounded Knee in 1890. New to the story is Jackson's account of Black Elk's season with Buffalo Bill's Wild West show in Europe in 1887. After missing the boat home, he lived in France for a year, falling in love and fathering a child.

About Black Elk's life after the massacre at Wounded Knee Neihardt had almost nothing to say. The holy man's Catholic daughter, Lucy Looks Twice, and his Jesuit friends were hurt and angry to find not a single word about Black Elk's 25 years as a catechist and winner of souls—at least 400 conversions, according to one of the Jesuits he worked with. Near the end of their time together, Neihardt asked Black Elk why he had turned his back on his own religion to join “a white church.” Neihardt's teenage daughter Hilda was present and later described the old man's response.

“Black Elk thought for a moment or two,” she wrote, “then he replied quite simply, ‘Because my children have to live in this world.’”

Jackson provides a careful and even-handed account of what happened next. Angriest at the omission was Father Placidus Sialm, a Swiss-born Jesuit who had spent more than half of his life working with the Lakota in South Dakota. He openly dismissed Black Elk as an “ignorant Indian” and launched a clumsy campaign to give the church a central place in the story of his life.

Eventually, Father Sialm went a step too far and Black Elk signaled enough. The moment has been described by Black Elk's granddaughter, Esther DeSersa:

I was at my grandfather's house, and he was sitting down, getting his pipe ready early in the morning, and here was Father Sialm knocking on the door...he came in, and he saw my grandfather with the pipe. Father Sialm grabbed the pipe and said, “This is the work of the devil!” And he took it and threw it out the door on the ground.

My grandfather...got up and took the priest's prayer book and threw it out on the ground. Then they both looked at

**“When Black Elk Speaks was published in 1932, the holy man's vision was the big, central thing.”**

each other, and nobody said one word that whole time.

And then they both went out, and I saw Father Sialm pick up the prayer book, and Grandfather picked up his pipe... Then they turned around, and they just smiled at each other and shook hands!

Sorting out what Black Elk believed is difficult. The available evidence suggests that at the end of his life he returned to his beliefs at the beginning. Near the end, he told his daughter Lucy and other family members, “The only thing I really believe is the pipe religion.” His son Ben was equally devoted to “the pipe” but considered himself to be a Christian, too. In 1969, after decades spent trying to clarify what he was, Ben told a roomful of school children, “Today it has all merged together, and I feel that I live the one life now.”

But more important than placing Black Elk is what he managed to save. The vision he described for Neihardt, and later amplified for another scholar, Joseph Epes Brown, preserves a clear account of a body of religious thinking that officials wanted to scrub from Lakota memory. The old-time Lakota always believed that it was the warriors who would save them. What Black Elk taught his people was to depend instead on something harder to take away than guns, the trust that prayers in their own language, delivered in their own way, would reach the god they addressed as Tunkashila.

---

Thomas Powers, a Pulitzer Prize winner, is the author of *The Killing of Crazy Horse*, among other books.

## Can Obama's policies survive a Trump regime?

After decades of books that described presidential campaigns as thrill rides, in which any bold move or gaffe could prove decisive, political scientists have begun to push back. The fundamentals are what count, they say: debate performances mean little next to the state of the economy and whether voters are tired of the party in power. *Audacity*, a brisk assessment of Barack Obama's tenure as president, comes off as a similar exercise in reframing. Jonathan Chait, a columnist for New York magazine, argues that Obama may not have excelled at political spin but "he has accomplished everything he set out to do, and he set out to do an enormous amount"—not only passing a landmark health care law and steering the country away from a "Second Great Depression," but boosting renewable energy,

reforming the federal student loan program and changing American life in all kinds of ways.

Chait writes that Obama succeeded despite Republican obstruction, frequently bad press—he counts at least 19 instances in which pundits claimed that crises such as the BP oil spill would be "Obama's Katrina," crippling his presidency—and "despair" from liberals who, Chait writes, wildly overrate the skills of previous Democratic presidents. (The sainted Franklin D. Roosevelt, for example, prolonged the Great Depression by giving in to conventional wisdom and imposing an austerity program.) Barney Frank, the former Democratic congressman known for his pragmatism and candor, has a damning cameo in *Audacity*, telling the president that Democrats' loss in a special U.S. Senate election in Massachusetts meant that the Affordable Care Act was dead. Time and

again, Chait writes, Obama cared more about the fundamentals—enacting policy—than about winning headlines.

The question mark now affixed to *Audacity*, written before Nov. 8, is the election of Donald J. Trump as president. Obama may have accomplished much by keeping his head down, but if he had devoted more effort to political showmanship, would the Democrats have done better in the 2016 election? Regardless of his influence on public policy, should Obama be docked points for leaving his party worse off? If a large part of Obama's policies survive the Trump administration, Chait will be able to write the foreword to a new edition of *Audacity* with vindication. If not, he may have to retitle the book *Hubris*.

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

## A small land with an outsized role

Nations, like people, fight over many basic things like money, power, ideas and land—especially land. No matter how big or small the land is, if it's worth something, it's worth fighting for. This has been the case with Crimea, the underbelly of Russia. It has been noted that Crimea is a place difficult to leave, physically as well as emotionally. The Tartars considered it Yesil Ada, "the Green Isle." No bigger than Massachusetts, it has historically captured the imaginations of people as varied as Romans and the Greeks, the Jews, the Italians and the Turks and the Bulgarians. But most importantly of all, it entices the Russians.

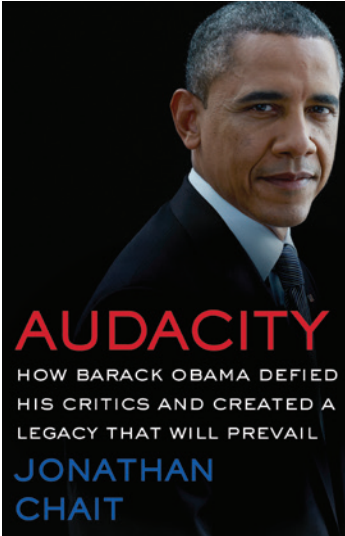
While it has long been a gleam in the Russian eye, it has been a thorn for Western diplomacy. It is a problem politically and militarily because it involves two great powers, the United States and the former U.S.S.R. (now Russia). Given its proximity not only to Ukraine and Russia, it is also a gateway to the eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East, hence the "nexus" of the book's title, *The Crimean Nexus: Putin's War and the Clash of Civilizations*. Written by Constantine Pleshakov (himself a native of Yalta), who is a professor at Mount Holyoke College in Amherst, Mass., *Nexus* is a perceptive study on how a small land can have an outsized role in Russian-American relations.

Professor Pleshakov details the

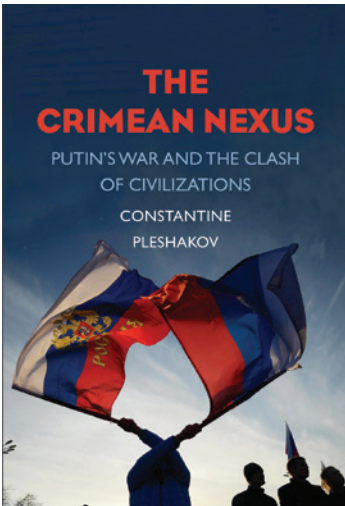
historical, political and sociological significance of his homeland. No easy answers are offered but, as any good book should, it presents much for thoughtful reflection for those who determine and control policy.

Now that a new administration is ensconced in Washington, the new president and his advisors should ponder these pages, process their lessons and be clear-eyed in its relations with Putin's Russia. This book is worth the effort.

Joseph McAuley, *assistant editor*.



**Audacity**  
How Barack Obama Defied His Critics and Created a Legacy That Will Prevail  
By Jonathan Chait  
HarperCollins. 272 p. \$28



**The Crimean Nexus**  
Putin's War and the Clash of Civilizations  
By Constantine Pleshakov  
Yale Univ. Press. 216p. \$28

## An evangelical pilgrimage in reverse

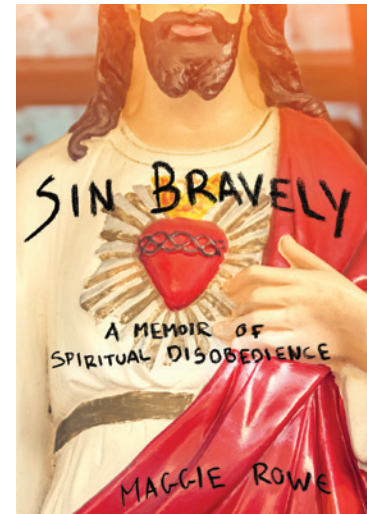
*Sin Bravely*, by Maggie Rowe, is a memoir about a young evangelical Christian in desperate need of a good spiritual director. The narrator and heroine is an aspiring actress who cannot be sure she has been saved, even though she has accepted Jesus as her personal savior not once, but many, many times. Hers is a spiritual journey in reverse, one that starts from a position of belief but then slowly seems to back away from it.

The catchy title comes from Martin Luther: “Sin bravely so that you may know the forgiveness of God.” The subtitle is tailored to our times: “A memoir of spiritual disobedience.” The author is a comedian and screenwriter living in Los Angeles looking back at her formative years. As a young girl, Rowe is thoughtful and precocious. She knows her Bible and is intent on doing the right thing. But despite her best efforts, she cannot decide what constitutes a sin. In college, she tries cursing, and then sleeping with her boyfriend, but her casual sinning leads to a nervous breakdown. She lands in a Christian psychiatric facility, where she is eventually diagnosed with “scrupulosity” and, after some resistance, agrees to take antidepressants.

It takes time for Rowe to find a trusted counselor. His advice sets her on an unexpected course, to

“sin bravely,” that would not be out of place in a Graham Greene novel. But her insights, while hard won, can seem like weak tea. “What if I didn’t have to worry about the Bible?” she asks herself. “What if I could just trust my instincts, my innate sense of good and bad?” Rowe is a winning narrator, and you can’t help but root for her. But this reader was left wondering whether a different kind of religious education, one that respected Maggie’s intelligence but also emphasized community and tradition, would have set her on a different path.

Maurice Timothy Reidy, executive editor; Twitter: @mtreidy.



**Sin Bravely**  
A Memoir of Spiritual Disobedience  
By Maggie Rowe  
Soft Skull Press. 225p \$16.95



## Can “Planet Earth II” help us love the ugly animals too?

On the surface, the ultra high-definition images of the exotic creatures in **Planet Earth II** can seem almost pornographic. Here are intimate encounters with nature, accessible to all with the click of a button, but curated and stylized to show only the most tantalizing views. The Hans Zimmer soundtrack and the intense gaze of the camera exalt the animals like movie stars. And as with our relationships to celebrities, it is easy to forget one animal when a more interesting creature pops on screen.

Premiering in the United States on Jan. 28 on BBC America, “Planet Earth II” is narrated by Sir David Attenborough, who guides us through the six-part series focused on ecosystems throughout the world. The meticulously captured videos build on the legacy of the original “Planet Earth” (2006), evoking a sublime sense of wonder. In each hour-long episode, the viewer is catapulted from location to location for glimpses into the lives of creatures

searching for food, safety or a mate. A glass frog protecting his developing eggs from vicious wasps offers a chance to experience the mystical beauty of survival in the jungle. This and other opportunities to empathize with the plight of non-human animals is the highlight of the series.

One gut-wrenching sequence shows crabs on Christmas Island being blinded by acid from invasive “yellow crazy ants,” which were, ironically, introduced by eco-tourism to the island. But that feeling of loss and guilt is quickly overcome as the series pivots to present the partnership of two chin-strapped penguins, who take turns on a daring commute across Zavodovski Island to bring fish back to their children while stepping past the dead bodies of their unsuccessful neighbors. The weakness of the series is that each emotionally gripping sequence is shortly followed by an equally moving portrait of another animal. It is so easy to get lost in the imagery of “Planet

Earth II” that it can become, in the words of Pope Francis’ “Laudato Si’,” “escapism to help us endure the emptiness” of our own lack of connection with the natural world.

The “Cities” episode gives the best examples of the gritty connection between humans and other animals. It offers surprisingly hopeful suggestions for creating symbiotic spaces for our species and the rest of the natural world. Current examples include a vertical forest in Milan, groves of metal “super trees” in Singapore and the practices of local butchers of Harar, Ethiopia, who have been feeding bones scraps to spotted hyenas for centuries.

In the brief “Diaries” sequence at the end of each episode, members of the production crew speak about their own sense of wonder as well as the challenges of filming. Yet in the context of the series, this social commentary, which asks the viewer to reflect on and improve our connection to nature, seems like an afterthought



Snow leopards are famously elusive and difficult to film. "Planet Earth II" features many animals threatened by climate change and human disturbance.

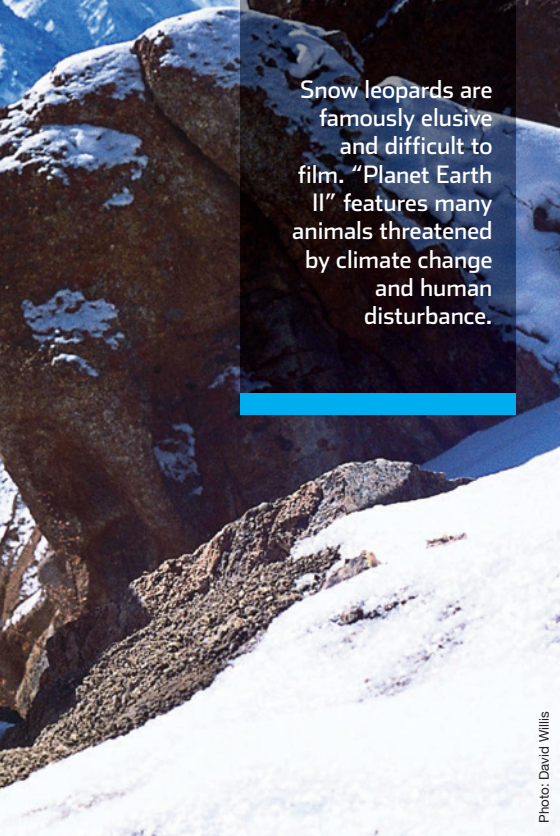


Photo: David Willis

to the extreme attention paid to visual storytelling.

Any sense of connection gained by watching these amazing creatures up close will be fleeting if our hearts are not open to finding and uncovering God in the ecosystems of our local communities. I will not be traveling to see the crabs on Christmas Island anytime soon. But can I instead commiserate with the rats trying to make a home in my apartment walls to escape the Chicago winters?

The stunning images and stories of "Planet Earth II" are not enough to give us, again in the words of "Laudato Si'," a "loving awareness that we are not disconnected from the rest of creatures, but joined in a splendid universal communion." In the end, we are left with the task to extend that sense of wonder beyond the screen and into the world around us.

Philip Nahlik is a graduate student in chemistry at Loyola University Chicago.

## Living in James Baldwin's America

In 1987, at the age of 63, James Baldwin died of cancer in Saint-Paul-de-Vence, France. At the time of his death, the author was working on *Remember This House*, a memoir on the civil rights movement framed through his relationships with Medgar Evers, Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X. In a 1979 letter to his editor, Jay Acton, describing his vision for the book, he wrote, "I want these three lives to bang against and reveal each other." The memoir was never finished.

In "I Am Not Your Negro," the Haitian director Raoul Peck uses the unfinished manuscript to offer a look into Baldwin's work and to examine the present state of race relations in the United States. Divided into six parts, titled, "Paying My Dues," "Heroes," "Witness," "Purity," "Selling the Negro" and "I Am Not A Nigger," the film juxtaposes art and various protest movements. With Samuel L. Jackson as narrator, Peck switches from scenes of Hollywood films, like Sidney Poitier's "In The Heat of The Night," to news footage of key moments in the struggle for civil rights, like the Montgomery bus boycotts. This contrast is most evident when the director pairs Baldwin's voice,

like his 1965 Cambridge University debate against William F. Buckley, with footage of 21st-century protests like the 2014 unrest in Ferguson, Mo., following the fatal shooting of Michael Brown. In one striking scene, we watch images of African-Americans standing, staring quietly at the camera, as Baldwin proclaims, "The story of the negro in America is the story of America."

This year will mark the 30th anniversary of James Baldwin's death. With "I Am Not Your Negro," Peck connects the civil rights movement of the 1960s with its 21st-century analogue, the Black Lives Matter movement, and demonstrates that the issues present in Baldwin's America are still very real today. He highlights the different realities of white and black Americans, emphasizing Baldwin's claim that "the world is not white; white is [merely] a metaphor for power."

Olga Segura, *associate editor*;  
Twitter: @Olga\_M\_Segura.

"I Am Not Your Negro" puts James Baldwin, center, in dialogue with the Black Lives Matter movement.



Photo courtesy of Magnolia Pictures/dan Budnick. All rights reserved.

# Those Who Bring Hope

Readings: Zeph 2:3, 3:12-13; Ps 146; 1 Cor 1:26-31; Mt 5:1-12

The beatitudes are promises that God has made to humanity. Some of these promises are fulfilled in every age; mourners are comforted each day. Others will only find fulfillment in the fullness of God's kingdom: "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land."

The beatitudes are eschatological, describing life in God's kingdom. There will be no mourning, no want, no lack of mercy; grace will abound; and God's own peace will bring injustice to an end. This was a message of hope for Jesus' first disciples. They lived in uncertain times, haunted by economic insecurity and threats of violence. This was also a message of hope for Matthew's audience. They were probably wealthier than Jesus' first disciples, but they likely suffered greater social and political persecution as a result. The beatitudes promise that present suffering in God's service will lead to future joy for oneself and for Christians yet to come.

Jesus searched the Scriptures to craft this message. He found promises that God had made to Israel in the past and made them relevant to present circumstances.

*How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the one bringing good news!*

*(Is 52:7)*



## PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

Does Christ's message ever shock you?

What words does the world need to hear? How can you speak them?

How can you live out your favorite beatitude today?

Throughout the Hebrew Bible, for example, God repeatedly affirms his care for the poor. Isaiah promised divine comfort to mourners (Is 61:2-3). The psalms promise that the meek will inherit (Ps 37:11), that those who hunger and thirst will be satisfied (Ps 107:5-9) and that the pure of heart will ascend to the Lord (Ps 24:3-4). Jesus reached deep into his tradition to find words of comfort that were meaningful to the people he served.

Naming the poor, the weak, the mourning and the hungry "blessed" was deliberately shocking. Such language requires a firm belief that God's kingdom is on its way. Without this, the beatitudes are airy platitudes, or worse, condescending justifications of human misery. Belief in the coming kingdom makes each of these statements a promise of salvation. Jesus believed he lived in the time of fulfillment. His words are urgent: "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land—soon! Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy—soon!"

Matthew the Evangelist understood that, in spite of Jesus' delay, God's kingdom has already begun. When Christ's disciples reveal it through word and example, they start to realize the promise of the beatitudes: they obtain mercy, they find God among the poor, they live under God's reign.

Like Jesus, we need to search the Scriptures to craft new messages of hope. Blessed are the anxious and the depressed; the God who feeds the birds of the air will care for their every need. Blessed are those who destroy the lives of others; they know not what they do and they shall be forgiven. Blessed are lives lost to abortion; God has formed them in the womb and loves them still. Blessed are children traumatized by war; they will play in the streets once again. Blessed are those defeated by economic injustice; they will find plenty on God's holy mountain. Words like these will shock the world out of its despair and turn its heart once again to dreams of hope.

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

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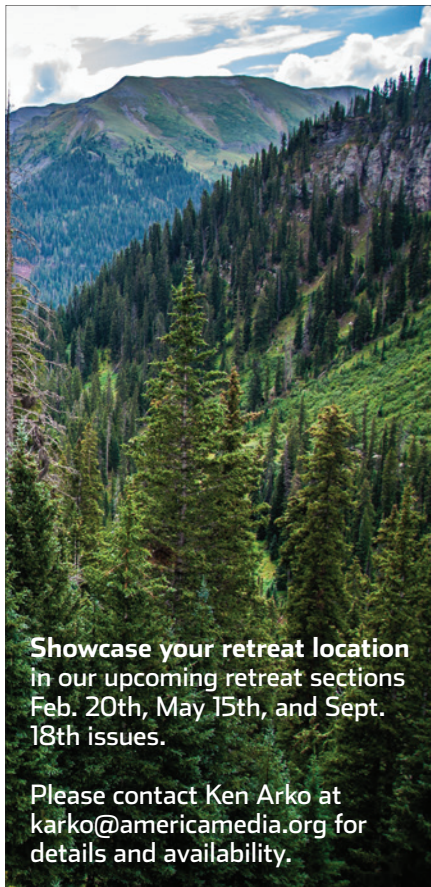
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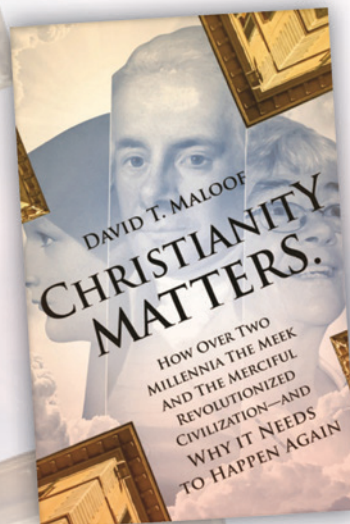
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# A Lamp Burning in the Darkness

Readings: Is 58:7-10, Ps 112, 1 Cor 2:1-5, Mt 5:13-16

In the movie “Babette’s Feast,” a French chef takes refuge in Denmark after collapse of the Second Empire in 1871. The citizens of her adopted town are mostly Lutheran pietists. They have a powerful work ethic and attempt to live simply, act justly and walk humbly with God in all things. It is an odd place for a brilliant chef; the staple breakfast item is a dish called *ollebrød* (ale-bread), which is simply stale rye bread, ground up and mixed with a splash of ale into a kind of paste. A memorable scene shows Babette’s nauseated reaction when she tastes it for the first time. As the film progresses and Babette takes over the task of feeding the town’s few paupers, the viewer sees that a change has occurred. The food has become better tasting, and the paupers look forward to Babette’s daily visit because of it. Babette’s art guided her as she prepared their meal, and by making subtle changes, she managed to mix simple food and simple joy into one dish.

Some people bring something different to the world. Babette was an artisan whose unusual skill brought forth small joys in others every day. In our Gospel this week, Jesus counsels Christians to live in a similar way: “You

are the salt of the earth! You are the light of the world!” Babette possessed a mysterious art that transformed the people around her. Similarly, Christians possess a power that can transform the entire world.

This power goes by various names in the Scriptures. It is the baptism with the Holy Spirit and fire that John the Baptist prophesied. It is the “new life” of John’s Gospel. It is the salt and light of today’s reading. When someone follows Christ in an active way, his power transforms not just the believer alone but also those with whom the believer has contact.

By his own admission, Christ’s only power is the love he shares with the Father. This is the power that drew him to a lifetime of service and a self-sacrificial death. This is the power he shares with us. The nature of this love is expressed well in our first reading: “Share your bread with the hungry; shelter the oppressed and the homeless; clothe the naked when you see them, and do not turn your back on your own. Then your light shall break forth like the dawn.”

When we are salted with this love and look around at the world in the light it gives us, the first glimpse can be intimidating. The world lacks love at almost every level. Human endeavors are often exercises in selfishness and industrious self-defeat. Even the gifts of family and community can sometimes resemble the ale-bread of the Danish village, providing enough for survival but offering nothing in which to rejoice. Into this insipid and shadowed world our Lord sends us to be salt and light. Like Babette, whose art elicited joy, the love of Christ in us elicits hope in everyone we meet. Our acts of service and self-sacrifice, of forgiveness and generosity and welcoming allow the power of Christ, which once transformed us, reach out and transform the whole earth.

*Everyone will be salted  
with fire.*

*(Mk 9:49)*



## PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

How is Christ salt and light for you? Which of his words or actions transformed you with his love?

How can you be salt and light for others? What kind of love does the world need?

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

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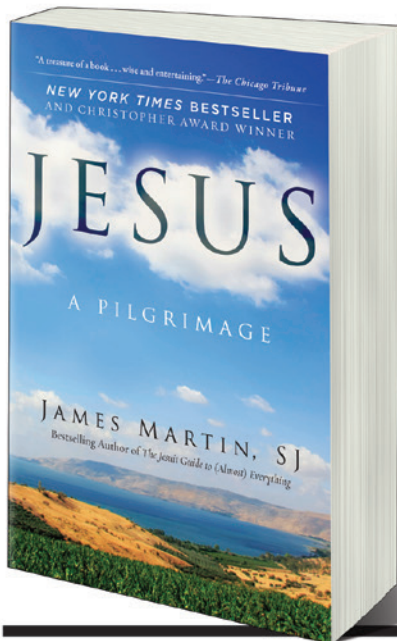
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# *Bourbon and Branch Won't Do It*

*Women hold the keys to making Washington work again.*

By Cokie Roberts



Donald J. Trump stirred hope in the hearts of longtime Washington watchers by holding high-profile meetings after his election with Democrats like Al Gore and Rahm Emanuel; he even sprinkled some praise on the opposition leader in the Senate, Chuck Schumer. Those of us who believe in the institutions of government grab at any hint that an effort is afoot to make them work again.

But do not expect a return to the days when comity could be coaxed with a little (or a lot) of bourbon and branch. That Washington is gone, probably forever—these members tinkle sparkling water, not the strong stuff. And in some ways, it never really existed.

House Speaker Sam Rayburn's storied "Board of Education" room, where members gathered for drinks and cards as the sun set, was largely a site for Democratic strategy sessions, a place to "educate" members about what the party expected of them, not a space to make peace with the other party at the end of a day of debate. Republicans met in their own "clinic" during many of the long years of Speaker Rayburn's reign.

But it is true that in the mid- to late 20th century, when Congress passed much of the legislation that shapes the modern United States, Democrats and Republicans would eventually come together to get it done. They could actually pass bills because they shared a common belief that the other side represented what they might consider a

wrong-headed view but not an evil one. The Opposition, not The Enemy, sat across the aisle.

In today's Capitol, for a host of reasons—families no longer move to Washington, safe districts encourage polarization, a hyperpartisan media inflames outrage—members of Congress condemn everything about the other side, from motives to methods. There is scant reason to believe that will change with the new Congress.

Take a look at a map of congressional districts following the November election and you will see parties that hail from two very different Americas. A broad swath of red covers most of the nation, with bits of blue interrupting it in New England, around big cities, in Hispanic areas of the West and along the entire Pacific Coast. Only 8 percent of House members come from districts that voted for the opposite party for president.

Why, then, would they talk to The Enemy, much less craft legislation with someone so foreign to their voters?

Then take a look at the members themselves. Heterosexual white men make up 88 percent of the House Republican caucus, compared with just 39 percent of the Democratic one—making for a completely changed dynamic from the day when white male military veterans made up the vast majority of both parties.

So even if these sparkling-water-sipping lawmakers suddenly switched to stronger stuff, instead of smoothing a path to civility the spirits

would probably just make the dueling sides more bellicose.

Yet one small light shines in this darkness of gridlock spreading into the future. Unsurprisingly, it is shed by women. Still a tiny percentage of Congress relative to their share of the population—19 percent of the House, 21 percent of the Senate—the women on Capitol Hill do come together more often than their male colleagues.

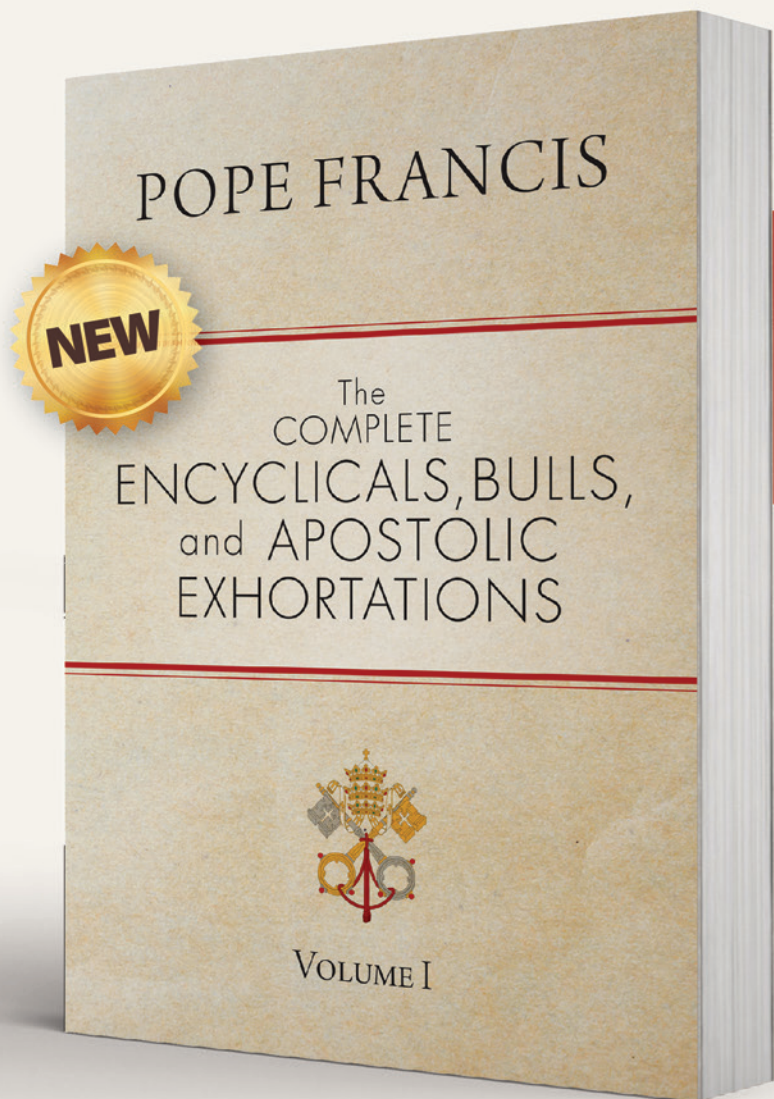
That is especially true in the Senate, where under the leadership of now-retired Barbara Mikulski they have met regularly and learned to like each other. When the government shut down a few years back, it was women who started the conversations to break the deadlock. Practical-minded female politicians understood that the impasse affected real people. Their reaction: "Oh, for heaven's sake!"

These women need support from more of us who share that reaction. And Congress needs more women. Then maybe, just maybe, Washington would work again.

---

*Cokie Roberts is a political commentator for ABC News and NPR. She has been inducted into the Broadcasting and Cable Hall of Fame, and was cited by American Women in Radio and Television Inc. as one of the 50 greatest women in the history of broadcasting. In addition to her reporting, Ms. Roberts has written six New York Times bestsellers, most dealing with the roles of women in U.S. history.*

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