## America

MARCH 6, 2017 \$6.00 THE JESUIT REVIEW OF FAITH AND CULTURE

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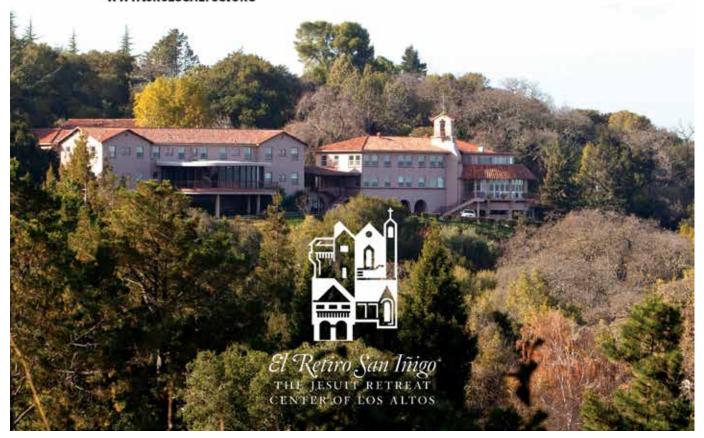
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### It's gut-check time

I felt the first tremors of the political earthquake of 2016 last spring at the Winking Lizard Tavern in Cleveland Ohio. I had just delivered a speech to a group of alumni of Jesuit universities when a fellow Jesuit and I popped in for a pint and started chatting up a college-educated, 30-something Clevelander about presidential politics. It was all quite ordinary and predictable until the guy said something that stopped us in our tracks: He had wanted to vote for Bernie Sanders, he said, but he felt that Bernie couldn't win, so he was now planning to vote for Donald J. Trump. "Trump and Sanders have diametrically opposed politics," I thought. "How can he pivot so easily from one to the other?"

Then I saw it. As the blood rushed to his face and his fist hit the bar, he told us that the political system is run by elites who don't care about people like him, the people Bill Clinton famously described as the folks "who work hard and play by the rules." This Clevelander felt betrayed. Now he wanted to blow up the whole d\*\*n thing, and he didn't care whether Sanders or Trump lit the fuse.

I felt other tremors during the trip. There was the white, millennial female at the Delta Airlines counter who said she was voting for Mr. Trump because she resented the suggestion that she should vote for Hillary "just because she's a woman." Then there was the African-American hotel doorman and the Latino Uber driver who also wanted to make America great again. After 72 hours in Cleveland, my gut told me that Mr. Trump could not only win the election but that he very well might.

Then I did something I rarely do: I ignored my gut. Like the rest of the media and most of the eastern establishment, I decided to trust the hard data, which all pointed to a Clinton win. The polls weren't wrong; they proved to be an accurate predictor of the national vote. But I ignored the data that mattered most; what my gut told me about who had the momentum. In politics, as in sports, momentum is that invisible, unquantifiable, powerful force that makes or breaks a campaign. What the Force is to "Star Wars," the Big Mo' is to politics; and your gut is the surest guide to measuring and channeling it.

The 2016 election reminded me that the gut still matters; that instinct, emotion, intuition-all those elements that make politics, well, politics-still matter. The science matters too. But you wouldn't ask a macro-economist for accounting advice. You'd ask an accountant. Similarly, the people who know politics best are not the political scientists but the politicians, not the pollsters but the people sitting next to you at the bar. The science, data, technical expertise—these all have their place. But there's a reason it's called "the art of politics" and a reason why politics is called "the art of the possible." Human beings and human behavior are a complex amalgam of body and spirit, faith and reason. In understanding them, we shouldn't make science do the work of art, or art the work of science, or the head the work of the gut.

Yet in our increasingly technocratic world we often discount what is unseen in favor of what is seen and measurable. And not just in politics. As is well known by now, the New England Patriots quarterback Tom Brady was the 199th overall pick in the sixth round of the 2000 N.F.L. draft. On paper, according to the stats, there wasn't much there. Now he's widely regarded as the greatest quarterback in N.F.L. history because Coach Bill Belichick had a gut feeling that Brady had that indescribable, indispensable quality that makes a champion.

That same Jesuit friend who joined me for a pint in Cleveland told me that he knew by the start of the third quarter that the Patriots would beat the odds and come back to defeat his beloved Atlanta Falcons to win the Super Bowl. How did he know? "I had a sinking feeling," he said. "I could feel it in my gut, and I could see it on the screen. They had momentum." Every broadcaster cited the hard data to tell us that the Pats couldn't and wouldn't come back. But Tom Brady had a gut feeling that they would and then they did. The New York Times columnist Ross Douthat had a similar gut feeling at halftime and it produced the best tweet of the night. "Seeing a lot of confidence this game is over," he wrote, "from people who apparently didn't live through 2016."

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



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### Is America great?

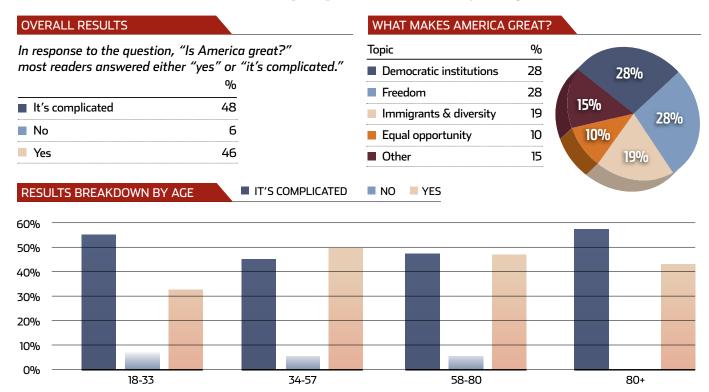
President Donald J. Trump's campaign promise to "Make America Great Again" helped him to win the election. Now that Mr. Trump is in office, we decided to ask our readers two questions about the United States with this language in mind: Is America great? And if so, what makes America great?

In response to our most popular reader survey to date, a mere 6 percent of readers told us that America is not great at all. Readers in the 18-to-33 age bracket were most likely to say America is "not great," while no respondents over 80 chose this answer. Michael Lando of Brooklyn, N.Y., explained his choice. "America is not great but has the potential to be," said Mr. Lando. "We have never come to terms with our history: the genocide of native people, slavery, Jim Crow, the mistreatment of immigrants, the second class status of women and so on."

The majority of survey respondents were split between two answers to the question "Is America great?": "yes" (46 percent) and "it's complicated" (48 percent). These two camps both saw greatness in their country and drew special attention to democratic institutions and the principles of freedom and diversity when providing their answers.

In contrast to the "no" category, readers over 80 were most likely to choose the "complicated" option. One such reader from Pennsylvania wrote: "I believe America always has strived for true greatness and only partially achieved it." Turney Gratz from Michigan also belonged to the "complicated" group. "I am both proud and yet hopeful that we can admit to our shortcomings and never be satisfied as we continue to seek to address our problems," Ms. Gratz told us. "I think we're called to make the kingdom a reality."

Readers in the 34-to-57 age group were most likely to answer "yes" and, despite their clear-cut response, they also gave varied, nuanced explanations. From New Jersey, Catherine Pavelec drew attention to how immigrants contribute to this greatness. "We were founded by immigrants. The current administration is, I believe, the most dangerous threat to American greatness in our history." Jill Caldwell from Montana highlighted the value of free enterprise in making America great. She also wrote, however, that "America has always been great for some but not for all."



The results of this unofficial poll are representative of a sample of America readers, who responded to our questions on Facebook, Twitter and through our email newsletter.

### Hate and Fear

Re "Prophetic, Not Partisan: Why We Need Courageous Preaching about Politics" (Editorial, 2/20): While there are a lot of issues that could be addressed from the pulpit, I see how going too much in one direction can be divisive. However, there is one area that to me seems pretty clear: We need as citizens (and Catholics) to step away from hate and fear.

How can we respond in faith to a climate of such hate and fear? How does the Gospel speak to me at this moment in history? I need to examine my conscience and listen for an answer—although the answer may not be easy.

### Michael Schubert

Online Comment

### To Whom Does Surplus Belong?

Re "Confessions of a Capitalist Convert" (2/20), by Arthur C. Brooks: With some exceptions, I find it hard to believe that there is any citizen or Catholic who does not recognize the benefits of capitalism. So his argument that the capitalist system must be encouraged to all as part of the obligation of Matthew 25, while something of a stretch to my mind, does not disturb me. I understand and share his goodwill.

Mr. Brooks does not pursue the issues far enough. While capitalism "lifts all boats," there are some "boats in the water" who do not participate or benefit in the capitalist enterprise. To whom does the surplus created by capitalism belong? What is the moral obligation in the pro-life position?

### Vincent Gaglione

Online Comment

### A Miracle

Economics and capitalism distort decision-making and encourage an emphasis on certain aspects of society at the expense of others. Mr. Brooks suggests that we should embrace capitalism as consistent with Catholic values, and as the most effective way to address the economic challenges of poverty, inequality and sustainability. I disagree. Capitalism and economics must synthesize both capitalism and socialism, infused with the values found in the words of Pope Francis and in over 100 years of Catholic social teaching.

It has been observed that there are "lies, damn lies and statistics." I don't claim that my interpretation of Mr. Brooks's statistics is definitive, simply that the evidence of the reduction of global poverty is murky at best. Most of the

recent poverty reduction is attributable to a handful of nations, most notably China. There are, however, still about three billion people living on less than \$2.50 per day, and many of them are now in urban areas with a higher cost of living and greater economic insecurity. To the extent that this represents improvement, it is marginal at best.

The case of China brings me to another problematic aspect of Mr. Brooks's analysis. In his paean to American free enterprise, he refers to the economic success of the "last few hundred years" and more recently the China-driven poverty reduction. This conflates so many different societies, from laissez-faire 19th-century North America and Britain, to the New-Deal-era United States and social democracy elsewhere, to post-Mao China, as to make the distinction "free enterprise" meaningless. China is a form of state capitalism and, as is the case with every nation today, a mixed economy with elements of both capitalism and socialism. Mr. Brooks acknowledges as much in an aside near the end of his essay when he states that "only free enterprise (accompanied by necessary regulation and proper social safety nets) has helped fulfill the noble antipoverty goals of our faith."

Mr. Brooks is right that there are laudable aspects of the free enterprise system. The price system is the most efficient method of allocation ever devised. Entrepreneurship and private property rights are key to economic stability and innovation. However, he is wrong to suggest that Catholics should embrace the American free enterprise system. Catholics and other people of faith need to compel economists and politicians to shape our mixed economy in a way consistent with the teachings on worker rights, the environment, poverty and inequality. If we can change economics in such a way, that would truly be a miracle.

### Brian R. Bennett

Setauket, N.Y.

### A Challenging Time

Re "The Future of Belief," by Krista Tippett (2/20): We live in a challenging time, when many U.S. Catholics hold different opinions as to what is most important to their beliefs, mostly based on one or two specific issues, greatly influenced by politics, social and financial status, as well as regional location. I agree with much of what Ms. Tippett states in this article, and will make it a point to follow her words and writings in the future.

### William C. Hoffman Online Comment

### The Political Gets Personal

### Partisanship and consumerism are a dangerous mix

Uber or Lyft? Choosing which ridehailing app to use-or which department store to shop at, or which hotel to visit-is no longer just a consideration of cost and convenience. Political warfare has moved from the campaign trail to our wallets, and the inauguration of President Donald J. Trump has only exacerbated the problem.

Travis Kalanick, the chief executive officer of Uber, who was previously a member of Mr. Trump's economic advisory council, quickly learned the pitfalls of doing business under the Trump administration when the hashtag #DeleteUber began trending on Twitter in late January. The company came under fire for its response to a strike by taxi drivers at Kennedy International Airport during protests against the president's executive orders pausing refugee resettlement and banning travel from seven Muslim-majority nations. Uber's suspension of its normal practice of surge pricing was seen as an attempt to profit from increased demand during the strike. And Uber is not the only company facing pressure to pick sides. The Grab Your Wallet campaign encourages shoppers to boycott retailers that sell Trump-branded products or advertise on the "Celebrity Apprentice" TV series, for which Mr. Trump retains the title of executive producer. In recent weeks, big-name stores like Nordstrom and Belk have dropped Ivanka Trump's fashion line.

C.E.O.s and shoppers alike have a right to vote with their dollars; indeed, from the food we eat to the cars we

drive, what we buy can and sometimes should reflect our values. But like owning a Prius and eating organic, deciding whether or not to #DeleteUber or to boycott Ivanka is a luxury most Americans cannot afford. Most people shopping at Walmart, one of the boycotted stores, are not trying to make a statement; they are trying to get by.

This unfortunate trend reveals the degree to which partisanship has infected nearly every aspect of American life. From the Super Bowl and the Grammys to the pulpit and the mall, the key feminist insight that "the personal is political" has been taken to an unhealthy extreme. When no area of our lives is fenced off from the rancor of hyperpolarized politics, it becomes increasingly difficult to build the solidarity needed to face today's very real economic and social ills.

What is needed now is not for the personal to be more political but for the political to become personal. "Government" is not simply a distant, faceless oppressor or a blunt instrument with which to impose one's will on others. It is a shared project of all citizens; its success depends less on the virtues conveyed in our spending decisions than on our commitment to seek the good of our neighbors, no matter their political persuasion.

### Canada Punts on **Electoral Reform**

After Donald J. Trump became the second person in less than 20 years to win the presidency while losing the popular vote, street protesters and constitutional lawyers alike called for a change in the way we elect our national leaders. But that cause already seems to be losing momentum. The realist view is that smaller states are never going to approve any change to a status quo that now gives them disproportionate influence in U.S. politics. On Feb. 7, Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg told an audience at Stanford University, "some things I would like to change, one is the Electoral College," but she did not elaborate, and the comment was reported as more of an "Over the Rainbow" vearning than a serious call to action.

Perhaps the United States is too big and unwieldy to change its political system, but Canada is not having any more success at it. In his successful campaign for prime minister last year, Justin Trudeau made electoral reform one of his key issues, vowing to eliminate the "first past the post" system that allows political parties to win elections with less than half the vote-the system also used in the United States. But in early February, Mr. Trudeau announced that he was abandoning the reform effort, frustrated by the lack of consensus for an alternative system. Each political party wanted a system-"ranked" voting, proportional representation or something else—that would play to its strengths, and Mr. Trudeau apparently despaired of reaching any solution

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that would be seen as equitable by all.

Back in the United States, we continue to debate not only the Electoral College but also redistricting, campaign finance and voter eligibility, all without consensus on what is a "fair" outcome, let alone how to get there. Indeed, just about every public policy debate has devolved into a zero-sum game between the two major parties. When politics gets too intense, Americans have a habit of wishing we were more like our "nice" northern neighbor. The news that partisanship is also dooming reform efforts in Canada is as welcome as a springtime blast of Arctic wind.

### 4,000 and Counting

America magazine will turn 108 years old this April, but that is nothing compared to our sister publication La Civiltà Cattolica. Founded in 1850 by Italian Jesuits, La Civiltà Cattolica has a storied history as one of the chief chroniclers of global Catholicism. Pope Francis visited the journal's headquarters in Rome recently to mark the publication of the journal's 4,000th issue. He thanked the editors and staff "for having faithfully accompanied all the fundamental passages of my pontificate." We join our thanks to those of Pope Francis and extend our congratulations and prayerful best wishes to our brothers in Christ. Ad multos annos!

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### Four ways to strengthen humanitarian aid

There is a common misconception that development work has hardly made a dent in global poverty. It is not hard to understand why. Stories of suffering and exploitation in low-income countries still abound. But often missing from the narrative is the overall progress that the international community has made. In the last three decades, rates of extreme poverty and childhood mortality have fallen, while access to water and schooling for the most marginalized populations has increased significantly.

These achievements are not complete, perfect or irreversible. Today we face the largest crisis of refugees and displaced people since World War II, seemingly intractable conflicts in the Middle East and Africa, environmental degradation around the world and the ever-present risk of pandemics. Future progress requires humanitarian agencies like Catholic Relief Services, where I finished my tenure as president last year, to reinvent themselves by boldly pursuing what I call the four S's: scale, systemic approaches, sustainability and stewardship.

First, because the people in need number in the billions, our programs must stretch each dollar to serve as many as possible. To do this, our projects must be rigorously evaluated and, when appropriate, standardized and replicated across diverse contexts. For example, by scaling up successful programs, C.R.S. has been working to revitalize the nearly extinct cocoa industry in El Salvador, strengthen households and local governments in 200 communities in western Guatemala and create livelihood options for 17 percent of the population in Gaza. Interventions for specific communi-

ties that cannot be replicated can be effective for small subsets of people but can also be an obstacle to reaching large numbers of people in need.

Second, while many people picture humanitarian work as the distribution of food and medicine, such immediate aid rarely gets at the systemic causes of problems. Hunger, for example, results from myriad factors, like degraded soils, disadvantaged bargaining positions for actors such as small farmers, the unequal treatment of women and the inability to access public transportation, roads or other government services. That is why C.R.S. uses the integral human development framework for systemic interventions. This means working with individuals, families and communities to attend not only to material needs but also to long-term economic security, family stability, health services, community building and conflict resolution-and giving stakeholders the skills they need to advocate for their rights.

Next, we must ensure that whatever gains are made will be sustained after a development project's funding expires. Success in this regard shifts the emphasis from what an aid agency does to what the affected community can and will do. This means investing in the capacity of local groups to formulate their vision, manage programs, collaborate across different faith, tribal or ethnic groups, and engaging local governments to set policies and provide supporting infrastructures. Sustainability also requires the involvement of business. One promising way to partner with the private sector is impact investing—the use of private capital to meet social needs through models that benefit both the poor and investors.

Finally, while the overhead costs of nonprofits receive a great deal of scrutiny, it is not the sole metric of good stewardship. Low costs do not necessarily signal that a nonprofit or government agency is making the best use of its resources; this can be discerned only through evidence-based assessments of programs. Low overhead costs fail to capture the long-term atrophy that occurs when organizations do not invest sufficiently in training their staff, partners and beneficiaries or in technologies like mobile communication and satellite mapping.

They are tough, but the four S's call us to accountability and help us to be worthy of the privilege of serving the brothers and sisters God entrusts to our care. These goals do not exceed our human ingenuity. Let us take all that is not right in the world as an invitation and opportunity to bring our hearts and wills, our courage and sense of adventure, and, above all, our faith that God multiplies our efforts to manifest his divine compassion into a world of suffering and of hope.

Carolyn Y. Woo served as president and chief executive officer of Catholic Relief Services, the official international humanitarian agency of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, from 2012 to 2016. C.R.S. serves 100 million people in over 100 countries through programs that span diverse sectors, including emergency relief, agriculture, health, education, water, microfinance and peace-building. She currently serves as the President's Fellow for Global Development at Purdue University.

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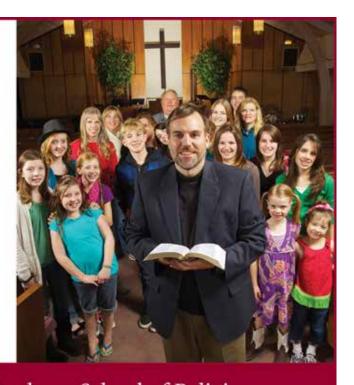
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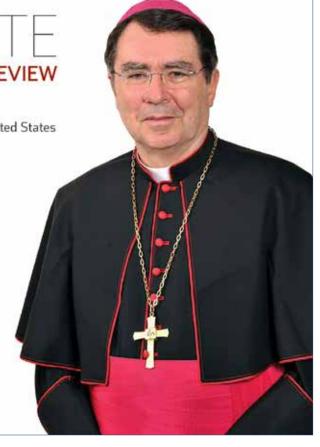
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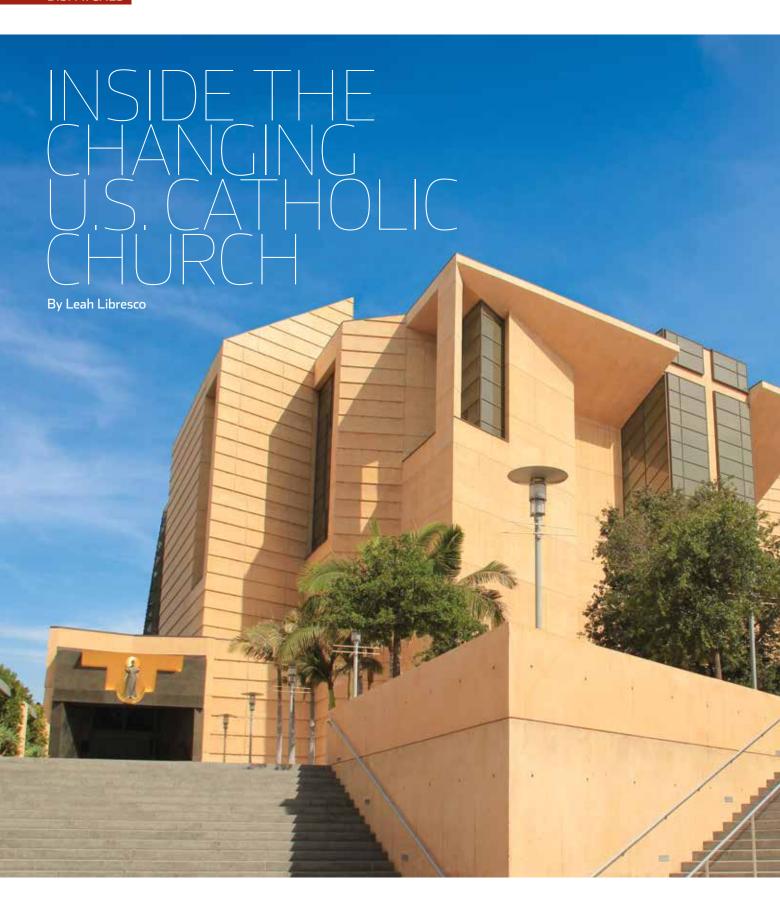
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The American Catholic Church is changing fast, and its creaky infrastructure is struggling to keep up. That is the takeaway of Catholic Parishes of the 21st Century, from the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown University. In this book-length report, CARA researchers offer a portrait of a church that is challenged not so much by hot-button political and cultural issues as it is by the quotidian concerns of leaky roofs and aging priests.

CARA surveyed priests and parishioners at a representative sample of churches across the country to create a fascinating census of the church's strengths and challenges, packed with more details than it seems this slim book could hold. Catholic Parishes describes a church that is strained by the task of caring for its large, mobile population as the distribution of U.S. Catholics has shifted dramatically to the South and the West. These two regions now hold nearly half of all Catholics in the United States-up from only about a third in 1985.

Struggling to respond to the new demographics, the church has left these growth regions underserved or forced them to innovate, for example, by building megaparishes that must invent new ways of serving their large flocks. Since 2001, nearly a quarter of new Catholic churches have been built to seat more than 1,000 parishioners, triple the share of megaparishes built from 1950 to 2000.

Big or small, these parishes are less likely to have a resident priest. CARA is careful to point out that this does not exactly constitute a priest shortage; the United States has a higher priest-to-parishioner ratio than most of the rest of the world.

But much of the U.S. parish infrastructure was built during what turned out to be a short-lived enrollment boom in seminaries after World War II. As a result, many dioceses that thrived during this time now have more parishes than priests to staff them. In the diocese of Green Bay, Wis.,

for example, there are nearly 100 more parishes than can be staffed by active diocesan priests.

The report authors, Charles E. Zech, Mary L. Gautier, Mark M. Gray, Jonathon L. Wiggins and Thomas P. Gaunt, S.J., do not just paint a demographic portrait of the problem; their book also takes a close look at how church leadership has tried to close these gaps and how people in the pews feel about these measures.

Canon law has changed to allow a group of priests to form a team to provide pastoral care for multiple parishes. In a pinch, a parish may have no resident pastor at all and rely on a parish life coordinator to manage all the logistics of taking care of the community, while a priest comes by only to administer the sacraments. Nine percent of the nearly 3,500 U.S. parishes without a resident pastor have been placed in the hands of such parish life coordinators.

These stopgap measures are embraced only reluctantly by those in the pews. Only 60 percent of weekly Mass-going Catholics said that they would support increasing the use of lay ecclesial ministers if their parish lacked a priest.

They prefer to have deacons (68 percent support), retired or foreign priests (71 percent and 73 percent) or just to share a priest with a nearby parish (76 percent). The worst-case scenario, in their view, would be to lose their parish home in a merger with another parish, even if it gave them access to a resident priest. Only 50 percent of weekly Mass-goers said they would support a merger.

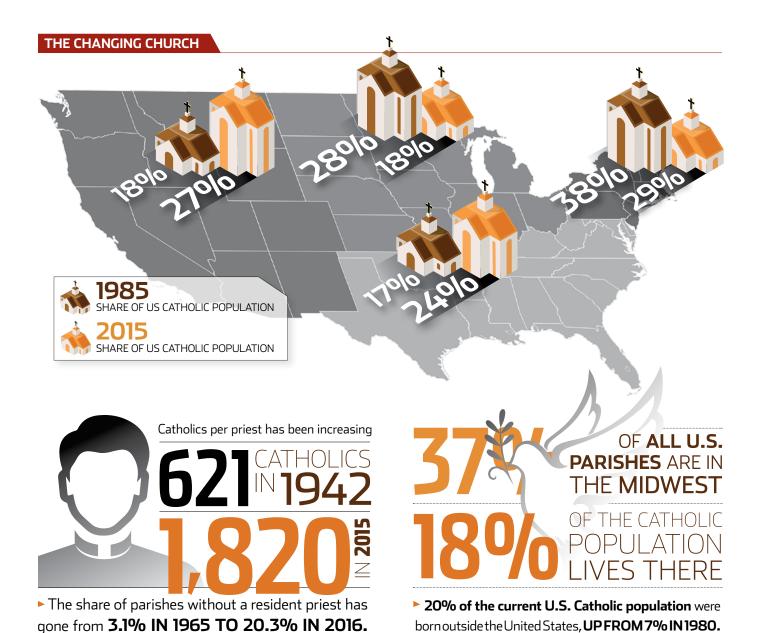
These survey responses are about parishioners' preferences in a hypothetical scenario, but the book's discussion of parish tithing makes it clear that parishes without an assigned priest feel a financial pinch. Parishes that are created through mergers, parishes served by a team of rotating dropin priests and parishes whose membership draws from a recently closed parish all take in between 60 cents and \$1.20 less per household each week than parishes without these limitations. The small difference in giving adds up.

Despite these challenges, the U.S. Catholic Church is slowly catching up to its shifting flock. The recent classes of ordinands are more diverse and better mirror the multicultural populations they will serve; painful but necessary parish mergers and closures are taking place; and churches are opening and expanding in the South and West.

But if Catholic Parishes of the 21st Century answers

the question of how the U.S. Catholic Church will adjust to the demographic changes of the last 50 years, it also raises another question: How prepared is the church to adjust to the changes of the next 50 years? *Catholic Parishes* suggests that finding the balance between rootedness and adaptability will be a constant challenge.

Leah Libresco, contributing editor. Twitter: @LeahLibresco.



Sources: Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (cara.georgetown.edu). Population figures refer to parish-connected Catholics, calculated by CARA using data from The Official Catholic Directory. Between 2000 and 2015, there were net losses of 1,573 parishes in the Northeast and 969 in the Midwest, and net gains of 28 parishes in the South and two in the West.



After he had to leave an uncle's home to make room for other relatives, Tony Romero, an accounting major at DePaul University, found himself living on the streets of Chicago. On good nights, he would ride the city's elevated trains so he could have a place to sleep. On bad nights, he curled up on an outdoor bench not far from DePaul's downtown campus.

Another student who had no permanent home would sneak into a DePaul building that had showers at night so he could wash up before his classes began in the morning.

"There are students who are forced to leave their homes because they are put out, or they have to leave because they live in a very chaotic situation. Some lose their scholarships or can't get federal loans and can't pay for both their tuition and housing," says Sister Judy Warmbold, a Daughter of Charity who helps DePaul students who do not have a reliable place to live.

The problem is hardly confined to DePaul, where student housing costs about \$12,000 a year, or even to Chicago. Nationally hard data is lacking, but according to the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, 58,000 college students identified themselves as homeless in 2013, 75 percent higher than the 2010 figure. Experts believe that number represents a significant undercount of the true severity of the problem.

"We really try not to use the word homeless; we prefer to say they face 'housing insecurity' because there is so much shame attached to the world homeless," Sister Warmbold says.

Sister Warmbold coordinates the DePaul Dax Host Home Program, which seeks to match students who are experiencing financial difficulties with free or inexpensive housing. The program is named after Dax, the town in France where St. Vincent DePaul was sheltered by a local family during his studies. DePaul officials believe their program could become a model for universities across the nation.

As tuition and fees rise, the affordability of housing is a growing concern for many students. For those who do not receive financial aid at DePaul, tuition and fees total about \$35,000 a year. With room and board added in, the cost jumps to nearly \$51,000 annually. At many other top-rated schools, total costs can easily exceed \$63,000 a year.

Mr. Romero's story has a happy ending. The Dax program was able to relocate him to a small apartment. Its owner let him live there rent-free. Other students have been relocated to empty bedrooms at parish rectories or to rooms provided by families willing to host students in their homes.

Sister Warmbold says the accounting department at DePaul pitched in to help Mr. Romero thrive in his new home and ensure he could continue his studies. "They were amazed to learn what he went through. They had no idea," she says.

Mr. Romero, now 29, has since graduated with an accounting degree. He works as a manager for H&R Block and oversees the accounts for Depaul USA, a charity that finds housing for the homeless. He also serves on the Depaul USA board.

His time on the streets, he says, "opened my eyes to so many things. I had seen people who were homeless, but I never comprehended it. The worst part for me was not knowing what was going to happen next."

Mr. Romero says he never passes up a chance to speak about his homeless experience because he wants to "wipe out the shame" other students might feel about their predicament. Still, homeless students on campuses remain largely hidden from view. DePaul's Dax program is now trying to purchase a residence not far from the campus where as many as 10 students can stay at a time.

Judith Valente, Chicago correspondent. Twitter: @JudithValente.

More than 100 bishops from across North America met in Dallas to discuss a number of emerging bioethical issues, including physician-assisted suicide and new biotechnologies. But one of the primary topics on the agenda focused on learning how recently won rights for transgender individuals could affect Catholic entities, including hospitals, schools and parishes, on both ethical and legal grounds.

The National Catholic Bioethics Center, based in Philadelphia, hosted a conference called Healing Persons in a Wounded Culture from Feb. 6 to 8, which included sessions on how federal rules meant to protect the rights of transgender individuals affect Catholic institutions.

The center's president, John M. Haas, said on Feb. 9 that the N.C.B.C. surveys bishops to determine which issues are of most interest to them. "We were a little surprised this came to the top of the list."

He said the number of questions from Catholic organizations to N.C.B.C.'s ethicists about transgender issues "has increased radically and surprisingly" in recent years. "We were having bishops and superintendents of schools and chancellors and university presidents and others calling us with questions about how to deal with some of the issues that have arisen." Federal mandates and recent legal actions on behalf of transgender patients suggest that more clashes over the treatment of transgender people at Catholic institutions may be inevitable.

Mr. Haas said that no transgender individuals were invited to make a presentation at the event, but he said that the bishops present were seeking ways "to accompany these people, help them, be with them, be close to them."

"There wasn't a hint of treating them as outcasts," he said. "We tried to garner as much scientific evidence for what was going on to be of help to the bishops in their pastoral approach to these people."

But the head of a group that promotes L.G.B.T. rights in the church called the meeting "very disappointing" and said the agenda suggested that it ignored "the most up to date scientific research on transgender issues."

"Why do bishops close their eyes and ears to the life journeys of Catholic transgender individuals?" asked Francis DeBernardo, head of New Ways Ministry. "They should instead follow the example of Pope Francis, who has revealed that he has had discussions with transgender Catholics."

The pope has been critical of efforts aimed at children that teach that gender is merely a social construct, and in 2015 the Vatican ruled that a transgender man could not be a godfather. "It is one thing for a person to have this tendency, this option and even to have a sex change, but it is another thing to teach this in schools in order to change mentalities. This I call ideological

colonization," the pope said in a press conference in 2016.

At the same time, Pope Francis has met at least twice with transgender Catholics and has urged that L.G.B.T. people be provided pastoral care if they seek it.

Rights for transgender people in the United States have advanced rapidly in recent year, but when it comes to treatment, at least one Catholic ethicist thinks there are still unanswered questions.

"For most medical providers the issue is settled in terms of seeing gender dysphoria as something that can be treated legitimately. However, Catholic ethicists still have many questions about its moral permissibility," Charles E. Bouchard, O.P., the senior director of ethics and theology for the Catholic Health Association, said.

"There is so much about transgender persons that we still don't know," Father Bouchard argued. "We just don't understand this well enough, and we're trying to be cautious before we make definitive ethical statements about it."

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



### Beijing and Holy See near accord?

After years of dialogue and negotiation, the Holy See and China have reportedly reached "a preliminary consensus" that "will lead to an agreement over the appointment of bishops." That is the firm belief of Cardinal John Tong of the Archdiocese of Guangzhou, described in a carefully worded article published in Hong Kong on Feb. 9.

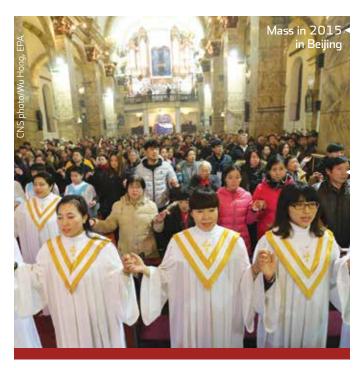
Cardinal Tong believes the agreement on this core problem "could be considered a milestone in terms of the development of relations between both sides since 1951," the year China broke relations with the Holy See and expelled the apostolic internuncio.

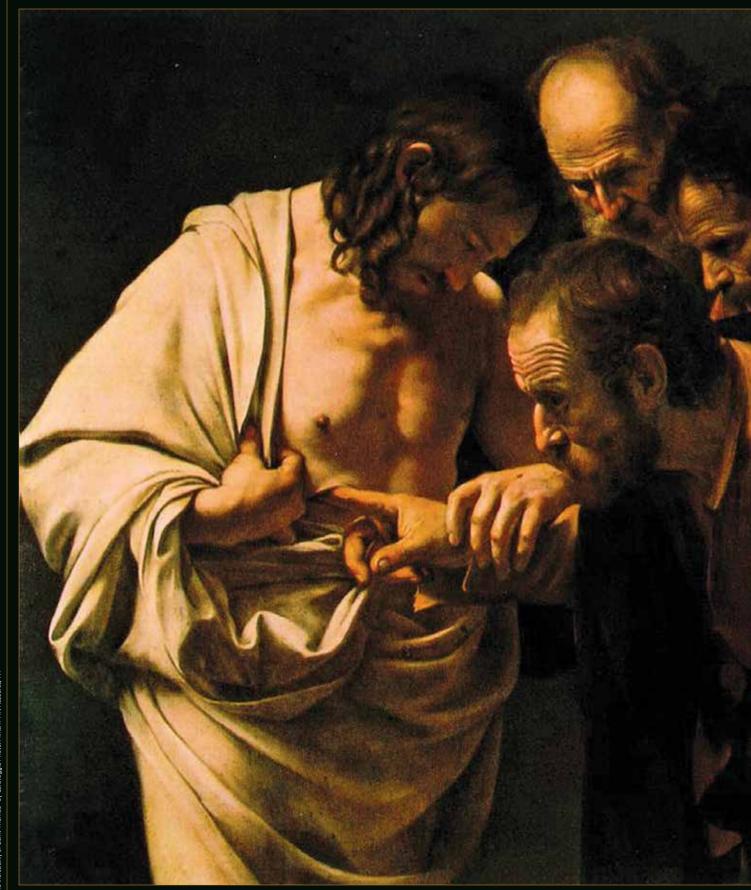
One fruit of this Sino-Vatican agreement, which neither side has confirmed, will be that "from now on, there will be no more the crisis of a division between the open and underground communities in the church in China," wrote Cardinal Tong. "On the contrary," he said, "these two communities will gradually move towards reconciliation and communion on the aspects of law, pastoral care and relationships."

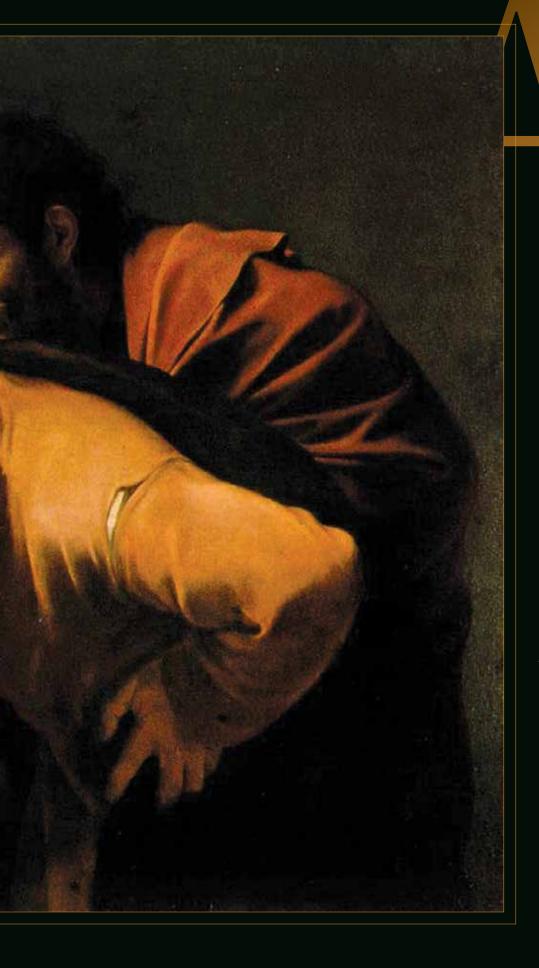
Cardinal Tong does not pretend to speak for the Holy See, but he said the two sides "have already reached a consensus on the problem of appointing bishops."

According to the cardinal, "If the pope has the final word about the worthiness and suitability of an episcopal candidate," as Catholic doctrine teaches and as he understands is part of the agreement, then the other problems related to the nomination of bishops that had been considered insurmountable become resolvable.

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



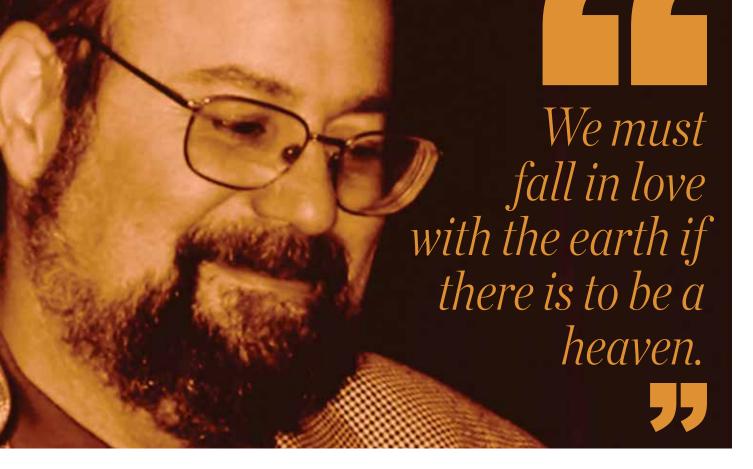




### Life Lived in God's Love

The luminous, prophetic theology of Alejandro García-Rivera

By Cecilia González-Andrieu



There is no shortage of stories of theological thinkers gone much too early. In recent history, several come to mind immediately: Óscar Romero, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Thomas Merton, Simone Weil, Ignacio Ellacuría, S.J., and Martin Luther King Jr. Tragically, we lost four of these lives to political executions. Anyone who claims theological thought has little to do with real life needs only remember these names to realize that prophetic theological work—the work of interlacing the Christian tradition with the world's pain—is dangerous business. Going back further in history, we recall the early deaths and unfinished work of Francis of Assisi and Catherine of Siena, their young lives lost to sickness.

The early death of those whose luminosity is snuffed out by the fragility of being human hits us particularly hard when we get to know their work and imagine what might have come next. Seeing the sturdy foundations and outlines they have drawn, we catch a glimpse of the thoughtful creativity that was their gift to the generations to come. Sometimes, this spark inspires us to continue their work. They have begun something we are called to resume building.

### A Life of Promise

Alejandro García-Rivera, simply Alex to most, was only 59 years old when cancer took him. He died on Dec. 13, 2010, the day after the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. He was

devoted to *La Morenita* ("the small brown one"). It was a source of comfort to all those who loved him to know she had come to take him back with her. Unlike Merton or King, you are not likely to have heard his name. I hope that after encountering him here, you will not forget it.

In battling his illness, García-Rivera put up a spirited fight. At one point during his difficult chemotherapy treatments, he even purchased a new digital camera in preparation for the research he was planning to do. He showed it to me proudly, vowing with his impish smile to learn its intricate new technology and to bring back pictorial treasures from faith communities yet to be discovered. The year before, in 2009, Fortress Press had published his fifth book, The Garden of God. In hindsight this was the first book of his most mature work. In it all of his intellectual powers and multiple insights coalesced. In Garden, García-Rivera, an ecumenically trained theologian who held a licentiate in sacred theology from the Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley and a Ph.D. from the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, wove his thoughts with García-Rivera the physicist, who studied at Ohio State. These two sides of him had been searching for a way to express what was impossible for either side to do alone.

García-Rivera was restless. He wanted to know how to speak about and work for the merging of the two realities of human history: God's and ours. In this final book, he was searching for the kingdom. The physicist made complicated calculations and asked difficult questions; the theologian probed what he called "the big story," what in theological terms we might call the metaphysical. Our small stories were all part of a big story of a cosmos, a mysterious unity. It was his discovery of a bridging language and method that allowed him to bring it all together.

### A Brilliant Friend

The discovery of this synthesis of ideas began in 2003 with A Wounded Innocence: Sketches for a Theology of Art, published by Liturgical Press. Before going more deeply into García-Rivera's thought, however, I must make a disclaimer about my role as interpreter: I am only a secondary source. What I propose here is my own work as a theologian reflecting on his work. Others may read García-Rivera and come up with very different and equally valid interpretations. Yet because I was his student, my familiarity with his living and breathing being-in-the-world adds an elusive layer to my interpretation, difficult to quantify. I also share a number of García-Rivera's core identity markers: both of us as Cuban refugees who arrived in the United States as small children, although a decade apart.

Through my time as his student, we discovered more affinities and some dissimilarities. Chief among these was García-Rivera's mirthful embodiment of the absent-minded professor. I recall his benevolent smile as I frantically looked for his missing office keys, which we eventually found had fallen through a hole in his coat pocket. On one occasion, as he wore a particularly tattered sweater (which I had offered to mend), he told me about his college days. My favorite: the day he spent so absorbed in deep thought that, when he eventually emerged from his mental wanderings, he suddenly realized that he was soaked through from sitting on a wet lawn for hours and had missed all of his classes.

García-Rivera's brilliance caused him conflicts with his faith, and as a young man, science became his religion for a while. But one day as he found himself working on Boeing's air-launched cruise missile project, he had "a mystical vision of hell." Imagining the destruction wrought by the technology he was helping design, he left science and began his road back to a critically informed and embodied faith because, as he has written, "salvation for the human has high stakes." García-Rivera had questions that did not only apply to the beauty of numbers or of nature but to humanity's place in a cosmos filled with the beauty of God. There was an extraordinary difference between working on rockets for space exploration and on rockets that would deliver death. The difference was the beauty inherent in one and the horror inherent in the other. Aesthetics was the connecting strand, and García-Rivera discovered it while working on A Wounded Innocence.

### **Into the Darkness**

Many people today feel a sense of dread and urgency similar to what García-Rivera felt while working on the cruise missile project. Many feel we have entered a uniquely dark time in human history. Yet this is a statement that has been made over and over throughout history and will be made again. People of good will all over our planet are witnesses to and victims of acts causing pain and suffering that too often is sanitized behind labels such as consumerism, xenophobia, racism, sexism, ethnic cleansing and the "collateral damage" of endless wars and catastrophic environmental degradation. I like to imagine that each of the theological thinkers I have mentioned would invite us to not look away but rather to engage this engulfing darkness. They would insist that we do some serious thinking followed by well-informed action to address evil in the world.

Bonhoeffer, Romero and Ellacuría would call us to encounter the real world fearlessly and deal publicly and forcefully with political systems that mask corruption and foster violence. Merton would invite us to engage people of other faiths, entering the commonality of our human spiritual depth and wisdom to find each other's dignity. Perhaps St. Catherine and the Rev. Dr. King would eloquently confront the church. They would surely call us to accountability for our easily preached but seldom-enacted principles of Christian love and would challenge us to live its agonizing demands. Finally, Weil and St. Francis would turn our gaze toward the least: to the poor and to the other creatures of the world. They would invite us to put ourselves at risk so we could be not only for them but with them. Losing our comfort and power would reveal that life lived intensely in God's love is never convenient.

### Into the Thoughtfulness-

I admit appreciatively that your choice to read this essay and engage in this bit of theological reflection with me says much about how you view your place in the world. I would say that you value aspects of our humanity that have been under relentless attack during this past year, most especially critical thought, which helps us to see and act on the difference between lies and truth. One of the many harmful

# If we cultivated our sense for beauty, we would know the truth of our place in the cosmos.

fictions gaining currency in our country is that intellectual engagement, challenging education and demonstrable expertise in particular areas of our common life are "elite" and meaningless pursuits. Along with this, there has been a wholesale repudiation of religious and philosophical wisdom, of the lessons of history, of the work of science and of that which we educators most wish to impart as a skill to our students—the search for coherence.

The current insistence that entirely incompatible thoughts and actions can comfortably coexist without challenge is the greatest danger we face as a people generally, and as Christians most particularly. Returning to the love of and from God expressed in Jesus' resurrection, those of us charged with leadership, teaching, community-building and ministering cannot allow the lie to stand that Christianity can coexist with racist, xenophobic, consumerist and sexist attitudes. We are called to risk our comfort and to act, not in ways that will "heal our divisions"—an often ambiguous phrase—but in ways that will keep those divisions from happening in the first place. We must ponder Jesus' "job description" and make it our own. As Jesus read in the synagogue from Isaiah's scroll (Lk 4:18-19), he succinctly defined the work he meant to do:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord. If we are paying attention, we know Pope Francis has made this his job description, too. What about us? As he has often said, he cannot do this work alone. I say all this because the theological thinker whose brilliance I celebrate here will give us some pointers about how to go about this work. I say this because though early death caught him, the promise of the resurrection's unfolding mystery was his passion. He was my teacher, and in his person and his thought he was like Isaiah, imagining the making of a better world. García-Rivera offers three invitations for us in these uncertain times.

1) An invitation to beauty. García-Rivera found the opposite of the cruise missle image of hellish destruction in Caravaggio's *The Incredulity of St. Thomas* (1601-2). The young risen Jesus, his wavy dark hair tucked casually behind his ear, steadies Thomas's hand as the disconcerted disciple digs his index finger into the gaping wound in Jesus' side. The scene should be horrifying, sickening, gruesome. It is instead extraordinarily beautiful. What was it that made it beautiful? Why was this story so carefully preserved by Jesus' friends? Only aesthetics could provide the answer, and the answer was in the truthfulness of the moment and in the goodness it engendered.

Years later, García-Rivera would explain that "beauty brings a kind of knowledge known only by being enjoyed." If we cultivated our sense for beauty, we would know the truth of our place in the cosmos and devote ourselves to the goodness required to tend the "garden" that he understood as the kingdom of God. Transformed by the beauty of the wounded one, we would dedicate ourselves to beauty-making and beauty-protecting acts and train ourselves to notice and fight against the ugly, false and destructive. He spoke as a prophet, telling us unequivocally, "We must fall in love with the earth if there is to be a heaven."

2) An invitation to woundedness. The pairing of our wounds and our innocence is a particularly important concept in García-Rivera's work. He urges us to consider jointly these seemingly opposed qualities. In popular usage, innocence connotes lack of experience (as in sexual innocence) or purity (as in the innocence of children). Innocence requires a type of unknowing that is then interpreted as goodness (as in innocence of a crime). Yet Thomas touched the gaping wound of the friend whose death he

had been mourning; this was traumatic and painful. Jesus, even though risen, showed his wounds, unable or perhaps unwilling to return to a state where he had not faced his full humanity through torture and death. In his wound offered to Thomas, they shared deep anguish and then joy. The innocence of unknowing was impossible for either of them; the wound was the truth. What would Thomas do with this knowledge? Here was the call to goodness. Jointly their innocence was wounded, there were scars, and in those scars of "wounded innocence" was beauty because they were truthful and yielded goodness.

3) An invitation to growth. In his last book, the unity of goodness and truth, with beauty as their marker, makes it possible for García-Rivera to speak about our place in the cosmos woven from the deep knowing possible when science and theology both seek human flourishing. Inspired by the prescient work of the Jesuit paleontologist and theologian Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and urging for its recovery, García-Rivera speaks from our time and to it. He notes the danger of a technology that provides comfort and power without any effort on our part. He describes tending a garden, which requires humility, hard work and an awareness of the interconnectedness of everything. In the garden, we cannot be innocently unknowing but must attend to the knowledge revealed by climate and place and to the wisdom gathered through time. Yet in our contemporary world we have become myopic consumers of everything.

### An American Eden-

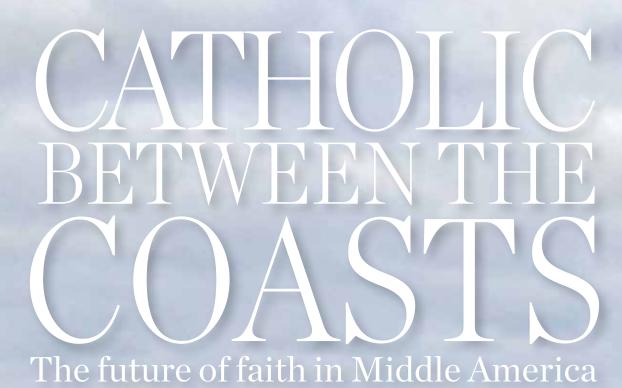
Alluding to the foundational story of the Hebrew Scriptures in Genesis, García-Rivera notes that "the garden of Eden represents an expansive creativity to a frail humanity...[and] the offer of an abundant life." By contrast, the "American Eden" made up of shops and entertainment, no matter how many fountains and manicured lawns are in it, "fails as a garden. It is an environment of life consumed, not an environment of life abundant." In other words, wounding our innocence enough to "know" the exploitation and misuse of resources inherent in a consumerist society will renew us, will bring the wisdom and faith that Thomas experienced and the fearlessness that characterized the post-Easter community of Jesus' friends.

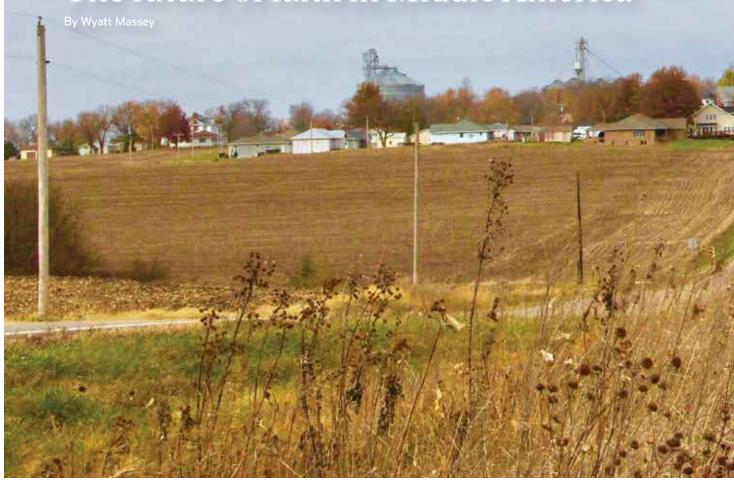
What's more, García-Rivera calls us to train our gaze

carefully to see that the pretty gardens of our manufactured Edens are not beautiful at all because they are not truthful but meant to stimulate our consumption. Our facile Edens of shops and technology are not good, because instead of creating community they create competition and make us cling to unknowing by escaping what is real. Seeing this will begin to reveal to us our vigilantly thoughtful place in the cosmos. From here the beauty of Jesus' wounds carried in his body as the opening between God's reality and ours reveal that "beauty is more than something to behold in forms but also a power that forms." God's love is the most beautiful truth there is. Here beauty becomes an invitation to stand boldly in its unconditionally universal proclamation tilling tirelessly a garden for all.

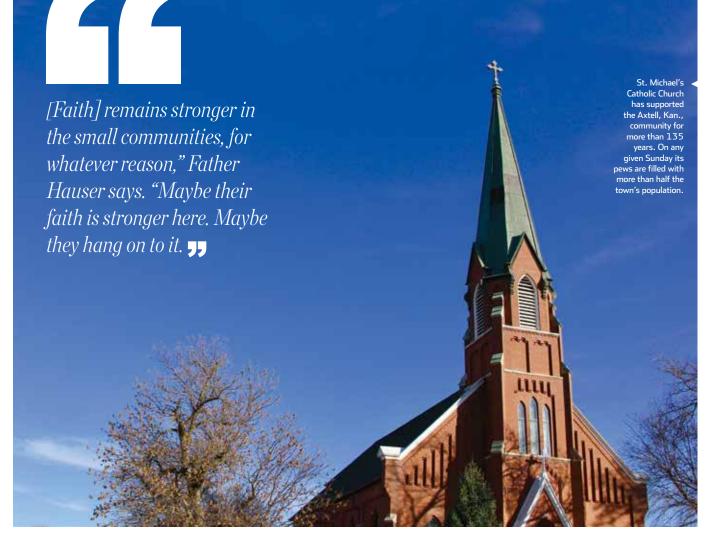
Of course, for the Christian community, the pre-eminent human whose life was cut before his time is Jesus of Nazareth. Before jumping to our faithful belief in him as the living Lord brought fully alive into the center of human history as the Christ, it is good to remember him as a gifted teacher and healer, whose thoughts and practices of extraordinary kinship, inclusion, mercy and forgiveness were deemed so dangerous to the powerful of his time that political execution became their answer. Jesus was killed in his early 30s, in earthly terms his work just barely begun. How to make sense of his early death? In Jesus' case, God's definitive word entered the heart of his friends as the fulfillment of a promise they noticed embedded in their sacred Scriptures. As Jesus repeatedly embraced and enacted God as boundless love, they came to understand that it was Jesus' free choice to die in faithfulness to God. Just as God's loving power had called all of reality into being, because of Jesus' love God's glory was revealed in the defeat of the final enemy. Jesus' resurrection into the arms of the Trinity was God's decisive word, confirming the truth of all the young Nazarene had said and done in his short life. God was indeed love, and the kingdom of God was unfolding—and continues to unfold—in him merging two realities, ours and God's.

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There is not much of a skyline in Axtell, Kan., unless you count the nine grain silos or the rows of wind turbines that stitch gentle hills to the clouds. Fields of corn and soybeans color the 63 miles that separate this community of just over 400 people from the closest city, Manhattan, on the Kansas River.

Land is fertile near Axtell. So is the community's faith. The steeple of St. Michael's Catholic Church rises above the pines and oak trees, and on any given Sunday its pews are filled with more than half the town's population. The Catholic faith is a marker of Axtell's identity as much as the roads that turn to dirt and gravel at the town limits.

The urban parishes of the Northeast, planted and sustained by successive waves of Old World immigrants, have long had a starring role in the story of American Catholicism. Today, many Catholics see the future of the church in the growing Latino communities of the South and West. Often overlooked in this narrative are the churches between the coasts and beyond city limits that are the bedrock of rural communities like Axtell.

In his book *Red State Religion: Faith and Politics in America's Heartland*, the sociologist Robert J. Wuthnow

notes that churches in Middle America often did not feature a high-rise steeple like those in New England because of the greater risk of damage from the powerful weather. Nevertheless, he writes, churches were "architecturally distinct.... An edifice demonstrated both a financial commitment and the congregation's expectation that its presence would continue."

In Axtell, it has. For more than 135 years, St. Michael's has supported the community. The building's red brick walls and white trim sit solidly and simply amid the surrounding homes. But the church's stability in the town extends beyond the foundations.

At the center of Axtell's church is the Rev. Albert Hauser. Like the farmers he ministers to, he works seven days a week, serving his tight-knit flock.

"[Faith] remains stronger in the small communities, for whatever reason," Father Hauser says. "Maybe their faith is stronger here. Maybe they hang on to it."

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The church in Axtell is indeed thriving. But here, as in many small towns across the country, uncertainty about the future is also a fact of life. Success and stability are based on crop yields, which are at the mercy of unpredictable weather. School enrollment is declining as young families seek opportunity elsewhere. Small businesses struggle against big-box competitors that sell the same products for a fraction of the price.

What little traffic the town sees consists mostly of trucks hauling corn, soybeans and wheat to the local cooperative. The parishioners at St. Michael's closely watch the commodity markets, something Father Hauser knew nothing about when he was assigned to the parish 15 years ago.

Farming, he has learned, is about the biggest gamble outside of going to the casinos in Las Vegas.

During the years when farmers did well, the church did, too. In 2010, church members pledged money to cover the cost of renovating the church interior—about \$90,000, Father Hauser says, which made his job easier.

But he has also led the church through hard times. The ripples of a tragedy are far reaching in a small community like Axtell. In May 2016, Father Hauser buried James A. Mathewson, a 46-year-old construction worker who died in a work-related accident. The death of the neighbor and father shook the town.

"In the city, a tragic accident may affect a few people or a few families. But the rest of life goes on.... In a rural community, there is an effect [on the whole town]."

Some funerals struck particularly close to home for the priest. Last year, he celebrated the funeral Mass for his sister-in-law, having also celebrated her wedding to his brother years earlier. He also said the funeral Mass for his sister's husband, who had passed away more than 30 years after Father Hauser had said their wedding Mass, too.

"It really was the whole gamut of joining them together and then burying one of them. A total separation in this life," Father Hauser says. "Our faith is our support in a time like that."

Catholics are the third-largest religious group in Kansas, with 18 percent of the population, behind evangelicals and mainline Protestant denominations, according to the Pew Research Center. These days, Catholic and the nearby Methodist and Lutheran churches gather on the Sunday before Thanksgiving for an ecumenical service, a far cry from the bitter polarization that characterized the religious landscape in Kansas during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

In 1889, Professor Wuthnow writes, a Methodist preacher in Axtell spoke so forcefully about evil in Rome



that violence broke out and the mayor sought state military intervention. The rift was not only religious but political. Until a party realignment following Roe v. Wade, Catholics were Democrats and Methodists were Republican.

"It's not necessarily the Catholics taking care of the Catholics [anymore]," says Janet Schmitz, who grew up in Axtell and now attends a church where she lives, in nearby Baileyville. "It's the town taking care of the town."

The community helps the community because that is who is around when problems arise. Elected officials feel distant, especially those more than 1,000 miles away in Washington, D.C. Many residents are wary of government aid.

In the fall of 2016, the Axtell grocery store was struggling. Jennifer Jones, the owner and a former St. Michael's parishioner (she now attends church closer to home in nearby Summerfield), was losing an uphill battle. She could not match the prices of big retailers in neighboring cities where many Axtell residents work. A small store cannot buy items in bulk, she says. Her store aisles number in single digits. Birthday cards are next to hardware, near DVD rentals.

Through a series of town meetings, the word went out to support small businesses like Ms. Jones's grocery. The digital billboard on a street corner announced: "Buy local for a strong lasting community." The weekly church bulletin features a similar message, in bold type: "Shop local. Shop at home. Support our town."

While its range of products is not as diverse, the local food supplier offers something big retailers cannot duplicate.

"I don't think you'd get a community as caring as this in other places," she says, before turning to a waiting customer to ask when her baby is due. She asks another shopper about her grandson's upcoming birthday.

Even with the push to buy local, what families purchase alone cannot sustain the business. Townwide dinners with food purchased from Ms. Jones's store, such as those organized twice a year by the local chapter of the Knights of Columbus, are a major source of the grocery's revenue.



Proceeds from a feast this past November benefited three local families, each of whom had been recently touched by tragedy. A parent of one family was badly injured. Two other families lost a parent. Compassion for others in the community is "bred into us," says Kent Kuckelman, a member of the Knights of Columbus for nearly 30 years and a lifelong parishioner at St. Michael's. The parents died young, he says, measuring ages the way lifelong town residents do—by how many years behind him they were in high school.

Another annual dinner organized by the Knights of Columbus used to benefit St. Michael's School, a Catholic elementary established in 1889. The school closed in 2014 because of low enrollment.

Ms. Schmitz, who attended the Catholic school as a child, says the decision "split the town." People of all ages were advocating on both sides. Debates were held in school board meetings and on street corners. "It was not taken lightly," she says.

Keeping the Catholic school open could have forced the closure of the public school, since the public school funding is tied to enrollment. In its final year, St. Michael's was down to 23 students in six grades. "That's not feasible... because there was no hope of the number of children going up," says Father Hauser. "The kids just aren't there."

Ms. Schmitz worries about the religious costs of closing the school. Junior high and high school students cross the street one morning a week to St. Michael's for religious

education, which is led by volunteer teachers. Religion has been a central part of life in Axtell, Ms. Schmitz says. "I hope that we don't lose that faith."

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The migration of small-town residents to bigger cities, especially by young people, has grown increasingly worrisome. More efficient machinery has decreased the amount of labor needed for farming, while further education and job openings remain clustered in urban areas.

Decreasing rural populations plague almost all Plains and Midwest states, but Kansas has been hit particularly hard, says Patty Clark, a former U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development state director. While Kansas' population has grown by almost 600,000 people since 1980, people living far outside metropolitan areas decreased by almost 60,000.

"I think rural communities are on the cusp," Ms. Clark says. "They are on the edge of the cliff."

In 1980, Axtell's population reached a peak of 470. The current population is just over 400, the town's lowest mark since its founding in the 1870s. The town offers few jobs beyond farming. The largest employer is the local electric company, which employs about 20 people. The average weekly wage in Marshall County, in which Axtell is located, is \$683, according to the Kansas Department of Labor.

"You aren't going to get rich working in some of the industries that are available," Father Hauser says. "They



will provide support for your family, yes, but over and above that, not too much."

Residents still manage to give back generously, if not with money then with their time and talents. Volunteer effort was vital in completing the recent church renovation. Parishioners who worked as electricians replaced light fixtures and the interior wiring. Others installed the new sound system and moved pews for refinishing.

Mary Jane Rochel, an Axtell resident for more than 60 years, stands near the church entrance, speaking in a hushed tone as she points out the fruits of the volunteer efforts on the church. She likes the simplicity of the chapel, she says, adding that St. Michael's has been her church home for decades.

"You sense a peacefulness when you come in here," she says. "It's always a good feeling to walk out of church and be thankful you were there."

For Ms. Rochel, the church is a place of hope but also a painful reminder.

Her husband, Regis, built the frame around the depiction of the Last Supper. He worked on the altar and constructed the crucifix from recycled pews during a renovation in the 1970s. He and Ms. Rochel were married for 62 years and served as extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist together. He passed away in November.

"Everywhere I look, I see him," she says.

Yet she returns to St. Michael's. Everyone helps out with church picnics or other events. Ms. Rochel has coordinated volunteers for several years and has helped out with kitchen and dining room duties. Everyone sings during Mass, too, which she loves. Between the voices of the congregation, guitars, piano and an organ, music echoes throughout the chapel.

"Sunday mornings, they really lift the roof off this place."

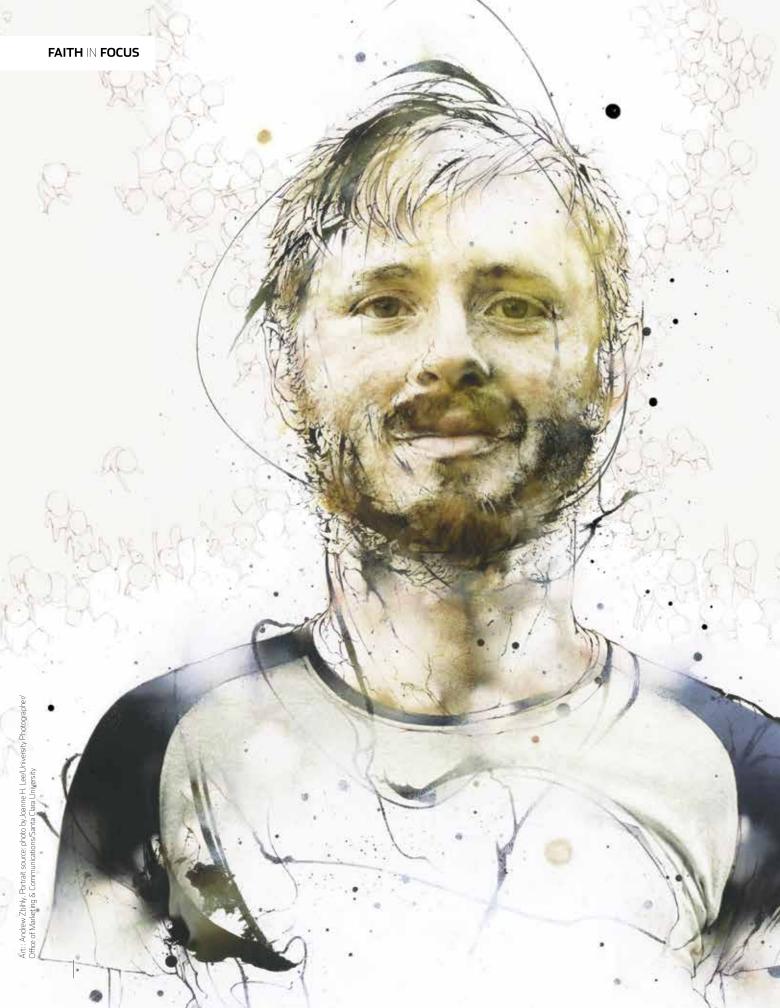
The town migrates to the church on Sunday morning. Trucks, covered in various levels of dust, gather in the church parking lot, coming from their usual spots near the lumberyard or hardware store.

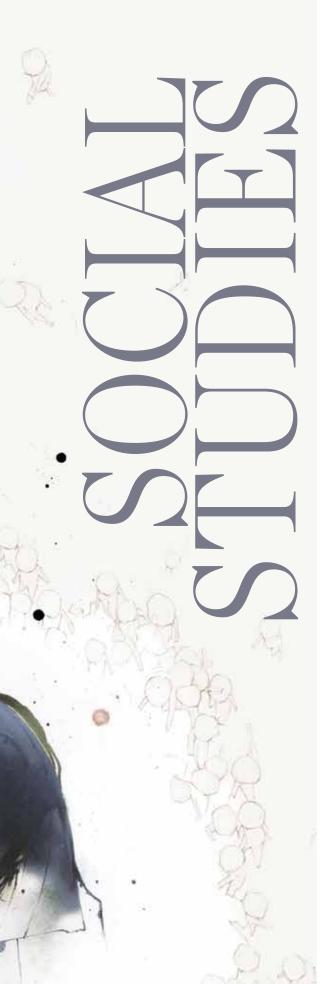
Residents and those living outside the city file in through the church's glass double doors to take their place in familiar pews. Three women playing guitars accompany another woman on piano as they lead parishioners in "Shelter Me. O God."

Father Hauser talks of the strength of God's love in God's willingness to suffer. When he finishes, those in the pews let the silence fill the space. For an hour, the stresses of life in Axtell fade.

Parishioners shake hands with Father Hauser as they stream past the bell-tower rope and out of the church. The sign on the way to the parking lot reflects the clear-eyed sense of hope those gathered have for the future of their church and their community: "Faith makes things possible...not easy."

Wyatt Massey is a Joseph A. O'Hare fellow at America.





### A life of service is never easy. Having autism makes it even harder. By Gus Hardy

The wind bites at my hands at 6:30 a.m. as I lock up my bike outside the Poverello Center, the state's largest homeless shelter, in Missoula, Mont. I walk through the double door, slap the front desk for luck and hole up in a staff office so that I can make my necessary prayers for the day to come. I do not always remember to center myself, but on the days that I do I am able to pay better attention to the various people who are recently out of prison or are struggling with addiction or mental health issues, all of whom I have chosen to serve as a Jesuit volunteer in the Pacific Northwest. It is a hard job that requires a lot of people skills that do not come naturally for me because I was born with autism.

In my work I have been called "cold," "impersonal" (and far worse) about as many times as I have been told that I am doing the work of God. No matter what people say, I look each person in the eye and try with everything I can muster to create the empathic connection that seems to come so easily to other people. It is bitter work for me, more than for most of the world, but God has called me to it, so I have got to step up.

For the last 12 years, ever since I was suspended from school in the seventh grade for crossing inappropriate social boundaries, I have struggled with a diagnosis of Nonverbal Learning Disorder, a form of high-functioning autism. Put simply, I am obsessed with my own interests to the point of blind stubbornness. I do not naturally understand social cues. I have fallen victim to an assortment of nervous tics. By default, I am not a good listener. More often than not, I have found myself on the outside of groups rather than in.

After my diagnosis, I began to work on learning simple social customs, like careful listening and making eye contact, and it felt for a long time as though I were trying to atone for the sin of who I was. From the point of view of a

## Ignatian spirituality's emphasis on self-reflection and serving others taught me how to listen, be attentive and stay present.

believer (especially a young Calvinist, as I was at the time), I felt that God had created me with a deliberate malice in mind, giving me an extra challenge in life—just because. I came to an understanding of myself as being disabled. Friends I had known for years began shunning me, and I felt as though the world around me functioned on some other plane that I could not naturally understand. In the words of Fulke Greville, an Elizabethan poet, I felt like I was "Born unto one law yet to another bound/ Created sick, commanded to be sound."

After my suspension, I resolved that I would struggle on, that I would not end up in jail or grow fat on my parents' couch, as I was told had happened to so many others with my condition. It is no accident that one week after I made that resolution I went on my first Christian retreat. It was during this retreat that I truly felt the presence of God in my life—rather than knowing God only as a dogmatic authority figure. The desire to please this God who gave me such joy and consolation, and the desire to advance socially for my own sake (and later, for the sake of others) were from then on completely intertwined.

My social advancement, far beyond what doctors thought possible, actually took place in large part due to Ignatian spirituality. Its dual emphasis on self-reflection and serving others taught me how to listen, be attentive and stay present. Many people had tried to get me to understand this before, but St. Ignatius was ultimately the most successful at getting through to me with his writings. I saw them as part self-help, part memoir, part psychology and part spirituality. I wish that more people in my position at age 13 were aware of the potential of this spirituality and how it can teach people with autism about being with and for others in a way that modern psychology cannot quite seem to manage. Of course, exposure to this spirituality came after I came to a genuine belief in God—a story of far more significance in my life.

### A WORLDVIEW OUT THE WINDOW

Looking back, I find it remarkable that I believed in God to begin with. Autism is a condition that does not allow for many gray areas in one's worldview. People like me see the world through logic more than emotion, and draw more on rationality than anything transcendent. To give an example, I talked a year ago with an old friend from high school who shares my disorder but not my belief. My friend had attempted suicide, reasoning that "I'm not contributing anything to the world, and since we're all screwing up the environment, I might as well not use up any more of the earth's resources." This friend could only see the world in terms of resources and expendability—with no mention of inherent worth or dignity. I still pray for her.

Paradoxically, I found that my belief in God, despite the hyper-rational worldview imposed by my disorder, actually increased my faith. If people like me had difficulty with the concept of God, then the fact that I believed in the first place must have meant something. But I could not reconcile my belief in God with the idea of a God who hated his creations, so I did the standard millennial church-jumping and eventually became a Catholic after three years of discernment that originated at a church in North Beach.

When I read of the vision offered by the church of a world "charged with the grandeur of God," there was no going back. The "pure" autistic worldview went out the window, and I realized the truth of what a wise man once said: "Logical validity is not a guarantee of truth." The Eucharist, the communion of saints, the idea of a kenotic, bleeding God—these things did not make sense by the standards of the world I had known. Yet if I believed in them, there had to be a ground for their existence beyond this world, in something I could not see. This belief in "something more," something greater than myself, is the main reason that I have come as far as I have, socially. Because I realized there was something greater than me, a higher standard to hold myself to, I could also strive to meet that "higher something"—and I have done my best to do so since.

I cannot tell you why God created me this way. I cannot say what purpose autism is meant to serve, and I cannot tell you if you are meant to conform to my behavioral standards or I am to yours. All I can say is that God pulled me out of a very dark time and gave me hope and a great gift—a sense of something beyond myself. In doing so, I was shown that the world is full of God's people who also cry

out in their own ways, and I am called to serve them. It is not an obligation but a desire that flows from a love that encourages me to grow. How will I serve? I do not know yet.

### MORE TO GIVE

More than a decade has passed since that first realization of what autism meant in my life, and I can honestly say that I have made social progress. I no longer walk into rooms talking loudly, ram myself into others for attention or spit food into a trashcan at a party in front of everyone just because I do not like the taste. People from Montana to the Philippines have bared their life stories to me as I sat before them, doing all I could to resist interjecting, and have told me afterwards what a great listener I am. I have come to a greater understanding of who I am.

This disorder is not simply a cross, nor is it merely something wonderful to rejoice in that makes me "a beautiful and unique snowflake," as goes the classic sentiment. It is a part of who I am and it is given by God, and so it is both, and much more. It is a struggle to talk about, because I do not want to be known for the rest of my life as "the autistic guy who did well." I have a lot more to give to the world than that, and I do not want to be defined solely by the limits of this disorder. To do so would be dishonest to myself and dishonest to the God I believe in. Keep in mind, this disorder has its advantages as well (ability to focus, analytical skills, passionate interests—in my case religion and public life), which is probably why you find a lot of folk like me in academia. Yet I know that even if academia is the path I eventually choose, I would want to be a professor who lived his life in the service of those whose needs are great, out of a love for God and God's people.

Whenever I consider my possible life plans, they are always in the context of serving others. That is what a belief in God led me to: an improvement in my social skills and my desire to understand others, not just so that I could interact with them but serve alongside them. A life of service can be difficult, and having a disorder that biologically wires one to have a hard time being with others does not help. But I am hoping that the fact that I'm out here, pushing myself to both serve and understand others must mean that I care all the more. This work I am doing now, it's harder than anything I have done, but it does me good and builds me up socially in ways I could never have envisioned.

And then there are days when it doesn't. Just the oth-

er day, a client at the shelter walked up and asked me for a lunch. With half an hour to go in my shift, and drained from another day, I gave him the lunch. "You know," he said, "you're not a good person." Struck by his words, I just looked at him as he went on. "You're not like the other people here. You're detached. You've got a cold personality. Why are you doing this?" And I could not really think of much else beyond asking myself the same question as he walked off, chuckling: "Why am I doing this?" So yes, these days happen. I stumble. Many times I come back home angry at God for making it hard for me to be with and for my clients, my community mates and my friends. Then again, Jesus fell. Can I be expected to do any differently?

Gus Hardy serves at the Poverello Center, a homeless shelter in Montana, with the Jesuit Volunteer Corps Northwest. He was the valedictorian of the 2016 graduating class of Santa Clara University in California.

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Kanye, Kendrick, Chance & the Surprising Christian Language of Rap



**There is no chapel** in Rockefeller Center, but at least twice last year, "Saturday Night Live" was transformed into Sunday morning at a Baptist church. In February, Kanye West, in anticipation of his upcoming album, "The Life of Pablo," closed the sketch comedy show with a surprise performance of the album's lead track—flanked by a gospel choir, R&B singer Kelly Price, pastor Kirk Franklin and the year's breakout star, Chance the Rapper.

By Zac Davis

West begins by singing a riff on the Prayer of St. Francis:

> Deliver us serenity Deliver us peace Deliver us loving We know we need it

Next, Kelly Price interrogates God on the problem of evil, asking:

> So why send oppression not blessings? Why, oh why'd you do me wrong? You persecute the weak Because it makes you feel so strong

Chance the Rapper spits a line about St. Michael the Archangel ("foot on the devil's neck"), whose prayer card he carries with him. Finally, Kirk Franklin concludes the song with a spoken prayer:

> Father, this prayer is for everyone that feels they're not good enough This prayer's for everybody that feels like they're too messed up For everyone that feels they've said "I'm sorry" too many times You can never go too far when you can't come back home again All of this, just after your Weekend Update.

To bookend 2016, "S.N.L." had Chance the Rapper back on (the main attraction this time) to perform his song "Blessings," a rap lavished in religious language and themes. In between verses, Chance, in his red Christmas overalls, jumping around like a kid playing hopscotch, sings "Happy birthday Jesus, happy birthday Jesus.... I like to say your name on network television."

This display of public theology wasn't just a fluke on "S.N.L." Rap got religious in 2016. Its beats and bars were baptized by holy lyricism and Gospel samples. Was it a conversion? A confirmation? Maybe you were told that hip-hop culture was gang culture, that rappers were drug dealers and misogynistic and ready to lash out. You were told that millennials weren't going to church anymore, that your grandson would wear the flannel you bought him on sale at Macy's but would cringe and stare at his shoes if you brought up Jesus.

What happened? Should we have seen it coming?

Like a beast crying out in the wilderness, Kanye rapped 12 years ago: They say you can rap about anything except for Jesus. That means guns, sex, lies, videotape But if I talk about God my record won't get played, huh?

And if Kanye said it, you can bet it was probably true. For much of the 2000s, rap music garnered mainstream attention and a fair amount

of radio play. But it had been significantly sanitized for popular consumption—the type of music that served as background music for beerpong-playing frat bros. Lil Wayne epitomized this trend, consistently topping charts with witty one-liners and chest-thumping anthems about being the best rapper alive.

Then Kanye West, as he has become accustomed to doing, redefined the genre. After hitting what many artists would consider the mountaintop of music, West's life descended into deep valleys of sorrow. His mother died unexpectedly due to complications from plastic surgery in 2007. A few months later, he called off his engagement to his longtime girlfriend. Finally, he became the target of public hatred after taking the stage and the microphone during Taylor Swift's acceptance speech at the MTV Video Music Awards to air his objections to her win for Best Female Video ("Taylor, I'mma let you finish, but Beyoncé had one of the best videos of all-time!").

In the midst of all of this, West poured his emotions into his record "808s & Heartbreak," an album that may not be his most impressive technical achievement but may prove to be the most influential. Today, it is perfectly normal (and commercially viable) for rappers to express their emotions. Drake is just one of several artists who made a name for himself morosely rapping about the traps of love and fame. But it wasn't always that way. Shea Serrano, a staff writer at The Ringer and the author of The Rap Year Book, highlights



"808s & Heartbreak" as a watershed moment in rap history. "After 2009, that's when it really started being a thing where rappers were rapping about their emotions," Serrano told me. And with emotions, religious feelings would surely follow. "Once that became okay, it became okay to talk about more stuff that's going on inside your head."

It was not just emotional rapping that led to rap's religious revival—it was suffering. While promoting the album, West explained, "808s' came from suffering a multitude of losses at the same time—it's like losing an arm and a leg and having to find a way to keep walking through it." West became hip-hop's Christ figure, taking the ugliness of suffering, diving deeply into it and from there allowing for a resurrection and reunion with the divine.

In 2009, while the world was

taking in Kanye's "808s," a young rapper from Compton decided to drop the stage name he adopted as a teenager in favor of his legal name, because he wanted people "to know who I am as a person and what I represent." That name was Kendrick Lamar, the second person of hip-hop's holy trinity.

Lamar, today's nearly undisputed king of rap, has sent music bloggers scrambling to explain his theology of hope and justice. The hook to his song "Alright" can be heard at Black Lives Matter protests across the country. It has become an anthem for protests against police violence but is anchored in eschatological trust in the arc of God's justice ("Hard times like, 'God!'/Bad trips like, 'Yeah!'... But if God got us, then we gon' be alright"). His biographical album, "Good Kid, M.A.A.D City," has been compared to Augus-

tine's *Confessions* for its achievement of theology as personal biography.

Religion, if ever referred to in radio music, is usually couched in vague allusion, like slipping a drop of medicine into your wine. Conversely, self-proclaimed Christian music, of which there has always been a hiphop subgenre, is incapable of integrating any life experience without reminding the listener bluntly and matter-of-factly of God's role, as if God were a jealous friend lurking behind every story that you told.

Lamar's lyrics soar above the line between sacred and the profane often held up as a standard for religious subjects. Some might find his language offensive at times. But many would have been appalled to learn that Caravaggio used prostitutes from the street for his subjects when painting the Virgin Mary. As Madeleine L'En-



gle prophetically said, "If it's bad art it's bad religion, no matter how pious the subject." Conversely, if it is good art, is it not good religion, too, no matter how irreverent the subject?

"[I'm] not a person that's putting it in your head—'believe this, believe this, believe this," Lamar told MTV in 2011. "I'm going through something, I'm a sinner and I'm trying to figure myself out. It never sounds preachy. It sounds like a person who's really confused by what the world has put upon him." There is a reason that Lamar speaks to a generation that has largely given up on organized religion-perhaps the same reason that the religious style of Pope Francis transcends religious ties. It is the style of a leader who also once famously said, "I am a sinner," who said that the church is called to bring people to Jesus by attraction and accompaniment, not by preaching at them.

Some might say this is all well and good, but is it building up the Christian community (read: filling the pews)? But devotional, faith-based art has always been about moving the heart. What happens to a soul after that is between an individual and God.

It was one of those lazy summer mornings, where the dollar van horns outside my window on Flatbush Avenue slowly wake me up, when I heard a peculiar sound coming from my kitchen. "How great is our God? Sing with me how great is our God?" I thought maybe one of my roommates, who is a nondenominational Christian, was waking up with the same praise and worship music I grew up with in my Catholic youth group. I opened my bedroom door to find my secular Jewish roommate singing along. It turned out he was halfway through Chance the Rapper's latest mixtape.

No artist had a better 2016 than Chance the Rapper. His ascent to the center of rap was complete after his work on West's album and the release of his third mixtape, "Coloring Book," a project that helps you to see where God has supported—and is supporting you-throughout your life ("I know the difference in blessings and worldly possessions/ Like my ex girl getting pregnant/ And her becoming my everything").

Religious influence in popular music, from Bob Dylan to Johnny Cash to Bruce Springsteen, usually draws from the depth that artists engage from a position of suffering. Rarely is God cited as the source for a melody's joy. While West and Lamar's music focuses heavily on sin and redemption, Chance the Rapper fills out hip-hop's bend toward religion with an injection of rejoicing.

The song "Blessings (Reprise)" looks hopefully toward a Christian utopia, like the land of milk and honey that the burning bush promised Moses ("I speak of promised lands/ Soil as soft as momma's hands/ Running water, standing still/ Endless fields of daffodils and chamomile"), and celebrates his relationship with God ("I speak to God in public, I speak to God in public/ He keep my rhymes in couplets/ He think the new s--- jam, I think we mutual fans"). Chance embodies the First Letter of Peter's instruction to "Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope."

One of rap music's defining features is its rebellious edge. As Lindsay Zoladz noted in The Ringer, "In an age overloaded with irony, Chance's beliefs in God, religion, and the capacity for social change are presented so earnestly that they come off as rebellious." And while big networks and record labels are often hesitant to engage taboo subjects like religion, rappers need labels less and less thanks to streaming services like Spotify and TIDAL.

The church needs artists. It is an obvious truth, and St. John Paul II made note of it in his "Letter to Artists," specifically noting the role of the musician: "In song, faith is experienced as vibrant joy, love, and confident expectation of the saving intervention of God." Well, church, may I introduce you to Misters West, Lamar and Chance?

Zac Davis, assistant editor. Twitter: @zacdayvis.

# American Dreams, 1963

by Julia Alvarez

All day I dreamed of candy from the store on Hillside Avenue: barrels filled with caramels, tins of pastel mints and tiers of chocolates beckoning in the window, and a tinkling bell that tattled I was coming in the door, a skinny girl, who didn't look thirteen, still reeling from the shock of losing everything, and hungry all the time for candy, more candy than I'd ever seen, a whole store dedicated to delights, proof we had arrived in the land of Milk Duds, Chiclets, gumdrops, from the country sugar came from but candy never got to. I roamed the aisles, savoring the names: NECCO wafers, Atomic Fireballs, Butterfingers, while the fat man owner watched me, sitting on a stool by the cash register; his pale eyes like ice mints behind his foggy glasses, lingering at my chest, as if the swelling buds under my uniform's white blouse were Candy Buttons, Jujubes I'd shoplifted; while his tiny, perfumed mother in black pumps and white lace collar waited on older patrons, boxing chocolates, petit-fours, assortments made to order for wives and sweethearts, May I help you, dahlink? in a heavy accent, an immigrant herself

from some past purge or pogrom; her "boy" born here, the obese product of an American dream gone greedily awry. He chatted as I lingered over barrels, asking none-of-yourbusiness questions about my parents, grades, what my people did on holidays. He knew my favorites, commenting as he rang me up, I see you like those Sweet Tarts. Candy necklaces sure are a hit with your set. A hit? My set? It was an intimacy I resented; my cravings were dark secrets I didn't want to share. Will that be all today? he asked, as if he hoped I'd say, Actually, I would like something else, to marry you and help you run your candy store. Outside, my new America was waking up to nightmare: freedom fighters marching; storefronts, some with candy stores like this one, burning; girls like me in bombed-out churches; dreams deferred, exploding; dreams I didn't know still needed fighting for; all I knew was hunger, as I learned the names that promised sweeter dreams beyond these candied substitutes, Juicy Fruits, Life Savers, Bit O-Honey, Good & Plenty.

Julia Alvarez has written novels, including How the García Girls Lost Their Accents and In the Time of the Butterflies, nonfiction, books for children and poetry. Her most recent poetry collection is The Woman I Kept to Myself. A recipient of a 2013 National Medal of Arts, Alvarez is one of the founders of Border of Lights, a movement to promote peace and collaboration between Haiti and the Dominican Republic. She lives in Vermont.

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# From the academy, books that think (and a few that sell)

By Jon M. Sweeney

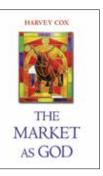
Each year, 9,000 professors of religion and biblical studies attend the joint meeting of the American Academy of Religion and the Society of Biblical Literature, held on the weekend before Thanksgiving. It is a major opportunity for book publishers to meet with potential authors and to market what is new to one of their core audiences. That is why I was there.

The guidebook for the sessions at A.A.R./S.B.L. in San Antonio last year was 496 pages long. It demonstrated, among other things, the highly specialized way in which academics are forced to make their reputations. Many professors still teach university, graduate school and seminary courses like "Introduction to the New Testament," but for a professor to build a reputation beyond her institution (and, often, just to make tenure), she has to try to break new ground. Take two papers chosen at random from the hundreds presented during the November meetings: "Castration for the Kingdom and Avoiding the Aitia of Adultery: Matthew 19:10-12," given by Robert Jarrett VanTine of the University of St. Andrews, and "Mary's Transformative Potential: Marian Varieties of Women's Rights Activism in the 19th Century," given by Elizabeth Hayes Alvarez of Temple University. Not exactly riveting material for most of us.

Some of the papers stem from dissertations being written, or recently defended, and some of those dissertations will become books—the sort of books that we call "monographs," which means "writing on a single subject." The successful ones sell only about 500 copies, so one has to separate them from the rest of the offerings on the exhibit floor at A.A.R./S.B.L. (This is not to say that I didn't find a few ultra-specialized volumes to suit my own idiosyncratic tastes, and that's truly delicious.) Other important books are to be found there, and they point to ways in which religion and biblical scholarship can feed, inform and delight much larger swaths of people.

Very few professors become best-selling authors, but it happens. One thinks of Princeton's Elaine Pagels from the recent past (*Adam, Eve, and the Serpent*; etc.), or Harvey Cox, whose 1965 best-seller *The Secular City* sold more than a million copies, making him wealthy even without his Harvard salary. At 87, Cox even has a new book, *The Market as God* (Harvard University Press, 2016), in which he argues that a new doctrine of God has emerged with The Market at its "celestial peak." He explains in his open-

ing chapter: "I will henceforth capitalize [The Market] to signify both the mystery that enshrouds it and the reverence it inspires in its adepts." One quickly gathers the singu-



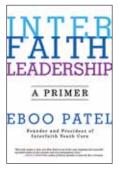
lar point being made, and reading further feels almost unnecessary. Cox still has an uncanny understanding of how religion influences culture, but in this new book he seems to have forgotten the importance of persuasion.

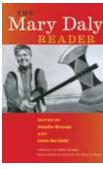
Writing on the historical Jesus and the origins of Christianity has proven to be headline-worthy for many decades now, since any new notion of who Jesus was, or is, is bound to offend a large group of potential readers somewhere. Publishers of these books tend to love publicity, no matter what kind. And so books by Marcus Borg and N. T. Wright were popular a generation ago and Bart D. Ehrman's have been best-sellers in the past few years. Jesus Before the Gospels: How the Earliest Christians Remembered, Changed, and Invented Their Stories of the Savior (HarperOne, 2016) is Ehrman's most recent foray. He knows how to talk about his specialty in ways that engage nonspecialists—and he knows how to kick up a storm.

There are a few genuine public intellectuals among professors of religion, and Cornel West is chief among them. He was at the conference, presiding over a plenary session titled "Love and Hate in American Religion." Timely! Another public intellectual, employed as a scholar but not in a university, is Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, the chief rabbi of England. Sacks gave a talk in Texas on "Faith in the Future." He is also the 2016 Templeton Prize Laureate; and, yes, he had a book to promote: *Not in God's Name:* Confronting Religious Violence (a paperback coming in February). Eboo Patel was there, too, but Patel does not teach or preach for a living, despite his Oxford Ph.D.; he is too busy running the Interfaith Youth Core in Chicago, dedicated to "building a movement of people from all faiths and traditions who are working together to change

the world." Patel was promoting Interfaith Leadership: A Primer (Beacon Press, 2016).

Many America readers will remember the sometimes notorious Mary Daly, the Catholic theologian and provocateur, who was a public intellectual in the 1970s and '80s, often interviewed by national media and appearing on magazine covers. A university press is about to publish *The Mary* **Daly Reader**, edited by two of her former students (women, of course), who dedicate the book to "Mary Daly her-Self." This is an interesting look back at





one of the most controversial thinkers of the last century, a self-styled "radical lesbian feminist" who taught at Boston College for more than three decades and died in 2010. Scanning the contents, one is quickly reminded of Daly themes like "After the Death of God the Father" and the "Phallic Power of Absence." The book is arranged chronologically, from a 1968 article on patriarchy to an autobiographical section of Daly's final book, Amazon Grace, published in 2006. One sentence from that excerpt is representative of all of Daly's work and how it intrigues and frustrates simultaneously: "The Terrific Shock of encountering and Realizing Be-ing is utterly unlike the foreground shocks which keep us imprisoned and circling the masters' mazes."

Less controversial are books taking note of the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation, including some by familiar names like Martin Marty, whose October 31, 1517: Martin Luther and the Day That Changed the World (Paraclete Press, 2016) is in its fourth printing, I am told. Bernard McGinn, like Marty a retired University of Chicago professor, is coming out with Mysticism in the Reformation 1500-1650, Part 1, the sixth volume in his "The Presence of God" series that began in 1991 with The Foundations of Mysticism. Not available until April, McGinn's book nevertheless was the pride of his publisher's booth. Also notable in this category is Diarmaid MacCulloch's All Things Made New: The Reformation and Its Legacy, a collection of papers and lectures, full of riches for anyone with more than a passing interest in the 16th century. MacCulloch is excoriated by many Christians, mostly for his professed agnosticism (something he shares with Bart D. Ehrman), but he is admired for his scholarship and abilities as a writer by nearly everyone.

Among all the thousands of scholars of religion and Bible who met in Texas, many were debating topics that are now-and will surely remain-at the center of current events throughout our world: gender identity, the emergence of a moderate Islam, genomic science, justice and vengeance in the monotheistic traditions, and theologies of land and exile. We desperately need those conversations. Look for a handful of those professors to be on magazine covers—and the new century equivalents—in the years to come.

Jon M. Sweeney is executive editor at Ave Maria Press and the author of The Enthusiast: How the Best Friend of Francis of Assisi Almost Destroyed What He Started.

# A fearless look at the tragedy of abortion

The Dutch Jesuit Ward Biemans has written a significant book on abortion. Indeed, it is quite rare to find this kind of evenhanded, broadly researched study. Biemans's focus is on Dutch and British abortion history and law, but the book has important insights for people outside of these communities—especially in the United States, where the (often self-reported) data are comparatively poor.

A word must be said about the steady fearlessness of Biemans in this work. Eschewing political rules that constrain most academic writing on this topic, he feels free to follow the data and arguments wherever they lead him. For example, he critically reviews the literature on the relationship between abortion and breast cancer—carefully

expressing concern, when warranted, about studies that may suffer from underreporting or reporting bias.

Perhaps the most powerful prochoice argument rests on the claim that restrictions on abortion do not actually stop abortion from happening—they only make said abortions safer. Biemans devastates the foundations of this argument by invoking multiple studies to show the number of abortions in the United Kingdom and Netherlands increased dramatically after legalization.

Even if the United States had European-style social welfare and access to contraception, there would still be about 700,000 abortions each year. Financial reasons are significant factors leading to abortion, but Biemans's research in the Netherlands demonstrates "relationship conflicts" are at least as important. He notes lack of

moral formation in the culture and lack of counseling in the event of a difficult pregnancy. Sex education refuses to focus on the possibility, responsibility and even beauty of parenthood as a result of sexual activity. This while women are rarely counseled on abortion alternatives, and men are generally absent from the scenario altogether.

Biemans's final conclusion that mothers and fathers ought to have mandated counseling before terminating pregnancy is a good reminder for those who focus on reducing the demand for abortion. While financial injustice plays a role, the formation of a virtuous people is the *sine qua non* of reducing abortion society wide.

Charles C. Camosy is associate professor of theological and social ethics at Fordham University and author of Beyond the Abortion Wars: A New Way Forward for a New Generation.

# The ebb and flow of a life with depression

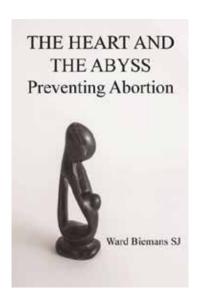
The ever-tightening grip of mental illness pushes its victims to disturbing ends. The narrative journey of This Close to Happy: A Reckoning With Depression is easy to follow, but its themes are not for the faint of heart. Learning to live with mental illness is a daily struggle, especially for someone whose family has been affected for generations. Daphne Merkin exhibits shocking honesty in allowing readers to look into her journey. Merkin presents a realistic but uncomfortable look into her struggle with depression. Her depth of writing experience on the topic comes through emotion-packed prose. The first-person account invites readers to see the personal side of a struggle, when much mental health writing can take a sterile, almost clinical approach to describing the sickness.

The book opens with a line whose message haunts the entire narrative—"Lately I've been thinking about the allure of suicide again." The theme of death, and more specifically what it can mean to someone facing a seemingly indefinite period of suffering, surfaces again and again. Because she lived on both sides, Merkin writes for those in anguish and those watching the anguished. Her mother struggled with mental illness, too, a cold reality that haunts the author as she raises her own daughter. The details of how she copes with her responsibility to

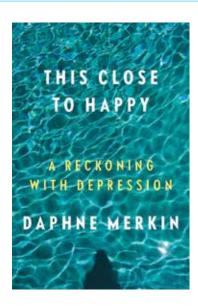
herself and her family are enlightening but at times troubling as her depression complicates the trial-and-error process of parenting.

Merkin packs her story with prose that rings: "You have lost the thread that pulled the circumstances of your life together. Nothing adds up, and all you can think about is the raw nerve of pain that your mind has become." This book offers the education necessary for readers need to follow depression as it rises and falls in one woman's life, as well as in the lives of thousands of others.

Wyatt Massey, O'Hare Fellow. Twitter: @News4Mass.



The Heart and the Abyss **Preventing Abortion** Ward Biemans, S.J. Connor Court Publishing, 392p \$40



This Close to Happy A Reckoning with Depression By Daphne Merkin Farrar, Straus and Giroux. 304p \$26

# From thought to action

Penha, a Brazilian organizer, is featured toward the end of Duncan Green's book How Change Happens. She was born into poverty, married young and raised six children. Despite all this, she took over the leadership of a workers' union when the previous leader was murdered under suspicious circumstances.

In Penha we find a woman with the strength of an ox and an overflowing enthusiasm for life. She welcomed all into the community and, in Green's words, "created space" for others.

Green's book also creates space for others; in this case, space for political and economic actors and institutions that the activist community tends to discount in their efforts toward social change.

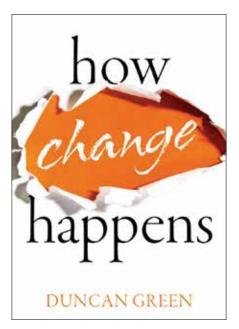
Green, currently a senior strategic adviser at Oxfam GB, brings a wealth of experience to this work. His unique contribution is what he calls a "power and systems" approach, which delves into the complex nature of power as well as the complex reality of political and economic systems, states, institutions, laws, policies and customs.

Green well understands from his own activist background why there is an impatience to change the world. He also understands that the activist world is just one part of a larger world that activists must engage. Through Green's judicious use of case studies, the reader comes to see that in the warp and woof of social change there is a place and role for all, from the banker to the banana farmer.

Green's book is not didactic. It reads more like a conversation with someone who has years of experience working, thinking about and acting for social change. The reader is welcome to weigh in. In this conversation, this reviewer would not find it surprising, as Green did, that faith and culture are often alive and well within various activist circles.

A reader might also note St. Ignatius' dictum that we are to express our love for one another and the world more in deeds than in words. How Change Happens would certainly be of help in the transformation of the dialectic of thought and action into a praxis of social change.

Anna J. Brown is the chair of the department of political science and the director of the social justice program at Saint Peter's University.



How Change Happens By Duncan Green Oxford University Press. 192p \$27.95



# August Wilson will not go quietly: revisiting "Fences" and "Jitney"

Say one thing for August Wilson: Greatness never got in his way. Even after he acquired the mantle of Great American Playwright, some time around the occasion of his 1987 Pulitzer and Tony awards for his drama "Fences," he remained relatively undistracted by the acclaim and high expectations, producing one of the strongest streaks of any American artist in any form.

Since he died in 2005, his stature has only increased, and his 10-play cycle about African-American life in each decade of the 20th century is justly cited as a kind of theatrical monument. But does this monument still live and breathe and talk? Two new productions of Wilson's work—a film version of "Fences" and a Broadway production of "Jitney"—handily make the case for its continued vitality, even as they flag some signs for concern.

In the case of "Fences," directed by and starring Denzel Washington, it is stunning to see and hear Wilson's mid-century Pittsburgh realized on the big screen for the first time, though it's also disconcerting to notice how much the intimacy and granularity of film brings to the forefront the seams in Wilson's writing: both his lyrical language and the reiterative bagginess of his dramaturgy. Imagine Tennessee Williams punching up the dialogue of an earnest Arthur Miller drama, and you get some idea of the embarrassment of riches here.

Washington and Viola Davis reprise their roles from 2010's solid Broadway revival as Troy and Rose, a mid-1950s couple living a version of the American Dream in a cozy middle-class home. But there are cracks in the foundation. Troy is an ex-baseball player embittered that he's reduced to a job on a garbage truck and prone to seek relief in carousing. Rose is a domestic rock whose exchange of autonomy for stability will exact a terrible price, and their teenage son Cory (Jovan Adepo) is caught between them, in a classic struggle of parental expectations, with the added racial overlay of dreams deferred and injustice internalized.

The father/son conflict bears this larger cultural baggage remarkably well, much as it did in different ways in the plays of Miller and O'Neill. A similar filial rift is at the center of "Jitney," an early play Wilson later rewrote, now in a Broadway production at Manhattan Theatre Club. Set in a dilapidated car-service office in late-1970s Pittsburgh, "Jitney" is not Wilson's finest dramatic construction, and the director Ruben Santiago-Hudson's production has some casting hiccups. But it finds its improvisatory heartbeat in discursive scenes of jitney drivers shooting the breeze between calls. It's not all mere breeze. There is some hard-knock talk, as well as Wilson's signature flights of lyricism, amid the diversions. Standout work comes from supporting players like Keith Randolph Smith as Doub, a wary observer with a clear-eyed self-reliance gospel and a harrowing Korean War story.

Similarly, the secret weapons of "Fences" are the supporting perfor-



mances of Stephen McKinley Henderson, as Troy's loyal friend Bono; Russell Hornsby as Lyons, Troy's musician son from a previous marriage; and Mykelti Williamson as Gabe, Troy's brother, mentally impaired by a war injury. Even more than onstage, the reactions and interactions of these secondary characters register with the force of deep listening and feeling, as film close-ups can uniquely do. It is a tribute to the fullness of Wilson's imagined world that "Fences" achieves some of its most memorable moments between and around the dialogue, or without it entirely. That may be as sure a sign as any that this great playwright is here to stay. As Troy taunts Death on more than one occasion: "I ain't going easy."

Rob Weinert-Kendt, an arts journalist and editor in chief of American Theatre magazine, has written for The New York Times and Time Out New York. He writes a blog called The Wicked Stage.

# From Marilyn Manson to Marian prayer

"You're the nun," a young woman says to a girl leaving the bathroom in a bar in an early scene of "Little Sister," a film from 2016 now available on Netflix.

"Um, yeah" replies the timid (but also quirky and hilarious) Colleen, a postulant with the Sisters of Mercy in Brooklyn. The three girls waiting in line erupt in giggles before an awkward pause. One of them apologizes, explaining, "It's just I've never seen one before." Then another, somewhat exaggeratedly, grabs Colleen's arm and offers her drugs, a sweet and comically misguided gesture.

In her religious community, Colleen is the only young person in the house. This young woman with deep love for Christ is struggling to be both a young, creative New Yorker and a service-minded woman religious. "Little Sister" tells the story of of her return home-after three vears of little to no contact with her family-to see her older brother, who has been severely injured and disfigured in the Iraq war.

"It took God six days to create the universe," explains Colleen's Mother Superior, "You should be able to get your act together in five."

Once home, Colleen revisits her unique and tragic teenage years as a goth makeup-wearing, Marilyn Manson-listening outcast with a severely depressed, emotionally abusive mother. While reaching out to her now reclusive brother, Colleen also attempts to reconcile with her mother, all before she must return to her religious community.

Set against the backdrop of the 2008 presidential election, this film touches on a host of important issues like society's treatment of recent veterans and the mentally ill. But ultimately it is about the unconditional love of family and how that love allows you to be your true self.

"Little Sister" echoes an often paraphrased quote from Mother Teresa. When asked what one could do to promote world peace, the saint replied, "Go home and love your family." In her cathartic return home, Colleen does just that.

Teresa Donnellan, O'Hare Fellow. Twitter: @TeresaDonnaLynn.

> In "Little Sister," Colleen (Addison Timlin, right) is a young postulant who returns home to face her troubled family.







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Mr. and Mrs. Michael E. Fox. Sr. • 1999California

Mr. & Mrs. George C. & Beatrice E. Fro	st • 2014 . N.Y.
Most Rev. Joseph A. Galante • 2014	New Jersey
Mrs. Donna Gann • 2012	Maine
Mr. and Mrs. Edward J. Geary • 2002	Mass.
Mr. Joseph E. Geoghan • 1988	New York
Mr. John J. Gibbons • 2016	New Jersey
Mr. Jerome P. Gilbert • 2003	Georgia
Mrs Laura Giles • 2015	New Jersey



$Mr.AnthonyGomez \bullet 2006NewJersey$
$Mr.MarkGrann is \bullet 2002Maryland$
Mrs. Marie-Jeanne Gwertzman • 1993 New York
Dr. Ronald Halvorson • 2013Minnesota
Mr. Jack Hambene • 2016 Missouri
Deacon Scott Haner • 2012Kentucky
Most Rev. Bernard J. Harrington • 1994 Minnesota
Rev. Msgr. Owen J. Hendry • 2005Florida
Mr. and Mrs. Bob Hernandez • 2014California
Holy Trinity Catholic Church • 2016Texas
Ms. Mary E. Hoppe • 1996Vermont
Ms. Rita L. Houlihan • 2013 New York
Mr. Denis I. Howe • 2014New Jersey
Most Rev. Howard J. Hubbard • 1989 New York
Mr. Roberto Iglesias • 2013Texas
Mr. Edward L. Jamieson • 2014 Massachusetts
Ms. Ann Jardine • 2016Illinois
Mr. Willis J. Jensen • 1988 Arizona
Miss Elinor L. Josenhans • 1985 New York
Rev. William D. Karg • 1998Ohio
Mrs. Mary E. Kearns • 2006Massachusetts
Dr. Francis X. Keeley, M.D. • 1993New Jersey
•,

Mr. James S. O'Connor • 2001 ......California

$Mr.JosephM.O'Donnell \bullet 2012Minnesota$
Rev. Vincent O'Reilly • 1990California
Sir Mario J. Paredes, K.G.C.H.S. • 2001 New York
Dr. Erasmo Passaro • 2015Florida
Mr. and Mrs. Martin J. Perry • 2015Illinois
Mr. Albert C. Pierce • 2006Virginia
Mr. and Mrs. Joe and Zita Pietrus • 2009N.C.
Mr. James E. Power • 1982New Jersey
Mr. Thomas E. Quigley • 2009Virginia
Mr. Matthew P. Quilter • 2010California
Most Rev. Francis A. Quinn • 1996California
Prof. Brian Abel Ragen • 1994 Missouri
Dr. and Mrs. P. Gregory Rausch • 2003Maryland
Mr. and Mrs. Robert T. Reilly • 1995Texas
Rev. William J. Reilly • 1995New Jersey
Mr. and Mrs. Timothy J. Reuland • 2001Illinois
Mr. and Mrs. Steven P. Reynolds • 1996Mass.
Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Roach • 1991 New York
Rev. Michael G. Roach • 2000 Missouri
Dr. and Mrs. Uros Roessmann • 1996 Montana
Ms. Ann Ryan • 2014New York
Mr. James T. Ryan • 2013New York

Mr. Mark T. Ryan • 1998New York
Rev. Thomas J. Sas • 2002Connecticut
Ms. Barbara Scanlan • 2014New Jersey
Ms. Gina Scauzillo • 2016New York
Rev. Msgr. Michael S. Schmied • 2014Virginia
Mr. Thomas Schneck • 2016California
Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Schneider • 2015Texas
The Honorable Mary Fingal Schulte • 2016 Calif
Mr. and Mrs. James J. Scott • 2004 Missour
Mr. Ward A. Shanahan • 1991 Montana
Mr. and Mrs. Robert E. Shields • 2008. Pennsylvania
Rev. Bernard S. Sippel • 1987Wisconsin
Mr. and Mrs. James M. Slattery • 2016 Georgia
Ms. Karen S. Smith • 2009New York
Rev. Lester E. Smith • 1988New York
Rev. Msgr. David Sork • 2014California
Ms. Margaret Srensek • 1987Ohio
Mr. and Mrs. Louis W. Staudenmaier • 1975 Wis
St. Ignatius Loyola Residence • 2016New York
Mr. Noah Sturr and Mrs. Bridget Sturr • 2004Mo
Rev. Charles J. Sullivan • 2012 Pennsylvania
Mr. G. Craig and Maureen Sullivan • 2015 Calif

Sr. Maureen Sullivan • 2004New Hampshire
Mr. and Mrs. Dennis & Linda Sweeney • 2014 N.W
Rev. Msgr. Ronald J. Swett • 1995California
Mrs. Marcella Pfeiffer Syracuse • 2008 New York
Ms. Minda Te • 2016Ohio
Ms. Katharine M. Teipen • 2004Ohio
Ms. Maria Theodoseau • 2008New York
Rev. John G. Vrana • 2016Ohio
Rev. Harry E. Wagner, Jr. • 2004 Louisiana
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Rev. John B. Wehrlen • 2007New Jersey
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Mr. and Mrs. John Wolfe • 1991California
Mrs. Catherine Spohn Wolff • 1983California
Mr. William L. Woodard • 2006 Missour
Rev. Ronald E. Wozniak, S.J. • 2014 New York
Xavier Jesuit Community • 2014 New York
Mr. Steven A. Zabicki, Jr. • 1977Maryland
Ms. Mary R. Zukowski • 2013Illinois

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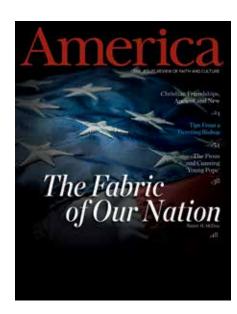
Mr. John R. Agnew • 2012Florida
Dr. and Mrs. Kevin Glauber Ahern • 2014 New York
Mr. Anthony H. Ahrens • 2002 District of Columbia
Rev. John T. Albosta • 1998 Pennsylvania
Ms. Margaret Anderson • 2014Illinois
Dr. Stephen L. Anderson • 2001Indiana
Ms. R. D. Arenth • 1997Virginia
Rev. Msgr. Daniel K. Arnold • 1987 Pennsylvania
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Mr. Thomas G. Auffenberg • 2001 Missouri
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Dr. Timothy P. Bukowski • 2004 North Carolina
Rev. James L. Caddy • 2012Ohio
Rev. Msgr. Angelo M. Caligiuri • 1985 New York
Mr. Lawrence J. Campbell • 2012 New York
Gregory C. Carnevale & Diane Mahon • 1994Mich.

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Mr. John J. Casey • 1987 Missouri
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Deacon Kevin E. Cleary • 2008New Jersey
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Dr. F. Farrell Collins Jr., M. D. • 1979. North Carolina
Mr. Daniel J. Combo • 2013 Montana
Rev. Msgr. Peter V. Conley • 2012 Massachusetts
Dr. Charles L. Conlon, M. D. • 1997Texas
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Rev. Robert J. Fenzl • 2000Wisconsin
Rev. Stephen Fichter • 2014New Jersey
Ms. Patricia T. Finan • 1994New York

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Most Rev. Joseph A. Fiorenza • 2010Texas
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Rev. Richard J. Groshek • 1988 Michigan
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Rev. James G. Gutting • 1989 Pennsylvania
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Ms. Judith H. Halli • 2014Alabama
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Mr. Thomas W. Havey • 2008Florida
Mr. George T. Hayes, Jr. • 2001New Jersey
John Gegner & Carol Hayes-Gegner • 2013 Md.
Rev. John H. Hedrick • 1988Wisconsin
Mr. & Mrs. John & Bernadette Hengesbach • 1987Ind
Mr. Rod Herrera & Ms. Marie Mitarotondo • 2014N.J
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Rev. Charles J. Hiebl • 1991
Mr. and Mrs. James F. Higgins • 1998 Pennsylvania
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Dr. Selma Hughes • 2004Texas
Mr. George F. Hundt, Jr. • 2016New Jersey
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Mrs. Ann F. Johnson • 1997
Mr. T.J. Johnsrud, R.P.H. • 2016
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Rev. Msgr. Donald E. Leighton • 2003 Pennsylvania
Mr. and Mrs. Paul Leitzinger • 1994Ohio
Rev. Thomas P. Leonard • 1985New York
Ms. Carol A. Litzler • 1993Ohio
Mr. & Mrs. Nicholas & Anne Lombardo • 2006 Va.

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Mr. and Mrs. Tom and Diane Mader • 2012 Calif.
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Capt. Lory Manning, USN (Ret.) • 2013Virginia
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Ms. Anne M. Menton • 1989New York
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Rev. Joseph M. Mills • 1988Kentucky
Mr. Frederick L. Milos • 1996New Jersey
Dr. William Mitchell • 2011
Dr. Emile R. Mohler, Jr. • 2014Maryland
Mr. and Mrs. Joseph A. Monahan • 2013Pa.
Mr. James T. Morley, Jr. • 2012Connecticut
Mr. Mathew E. Morningstar • 2015 New York
Mr. and Mrs. Edward N. Morris • 1992Alabama
Ms. Sara L. Morrison • 1980Iowa
Mr. Richard F. Morrisroe • 1982Indiana
Mr. and Mrs. Paul Moses • 1993New York
Ms. Barbara Mosley • 2002Iowa
Mr. Richard Mullan • 1998New York
Mr. Joseph W. Mullen, Jr. • 2003California
Mr. and Mrs. George W. Murphy • 1991Pa.
Mr. Daniel R. Murray • 2005Illinois
Dr. Carolyn A. Myers, Ph.D. • 2012Texas
Rev. Richard M. Myhalyk, S.S.E. • 2013Alabama
Mr. and Mrs. Patrick M. O'Donnell • 1988Pa.
Mr. John F. O'Keefe • 2013California
Mr. Hubert J. O'Toole • 2003New Jersey
Mr. Edward D. Ott • 1996Louisiana
Mr. P. John Owen • 2013California
Rev. Michael L. Palazzo • 2000New York
Ms. Janice M. Patronite • 2015
Mr. and Mrs. John and Cythnia Peck • 2015
Rev. Steven J. Peterson • 1990New York
Ms. Elizabeth Picard • 2016Texas
Mr. Martin J. Pino • 2010Massachusetts

Mr. Tom Pipal • 2016......Colorado

Rev. James H. Plough • 1998Colorado
Mr. John A. Pocs • 1988Ohio
Mr. J. Kenneth Poggenburg, Jr. • 2014 California
Mr. Marcus P. Porcelli • 1997New Jersey
Mr. Denis J. and Mrs. Patricia Quinn • 2016 N.Y
Mr. Francis Gerald Ray • 2015Washington
Deacon and Mrs. George W. Reade • 2012 Utah
Ms. Elinor Myers Rees • 2000 Georgia
Rev. Joseph F. Reynolds • 2014 New York
Rev. Norman D. Riksen • 2015 Michigar
Mr. Stephen F. Riley, P.C. • 2016D.C
Ms. Teresa Roberts • 2016California
Mr. Kevin Roddy & Ms. Diane Clarke • 2000 Calif
Most Rev. Frank J. Rodimer • 2014New Jersey
Mr. and $Mrs.$ Ricardo R. Rodriguiz • 2007 . Michigar
Mr. and Mrs. Guy R. Rorive • 2016California
Most Rev. Peter A. Rosazza, D.D. • 1987Conn
Rev. Paul J. Rossi • 2003California
Rev. Msgr. John Rowan • 2002New York
Mr. & Mrs. Mark & Margaret Scheibe • 1988 Wash
Dr. and Mrs. Charles and Peg Schlegel • 2012 Conn

Ms. Mary Ann Schneidenwind • 2016 New	v York
Ms. Esther F. Seeley • 2004Massach	usetts
Ms. Maryann Semancik • 2014Cali	fornia
Mrs. Mary DuBois Sexton • 1999Mar	yland
Mr. Terrence P. Shaughnessy • 1995Mini	nesota
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Mr. Sam Sirianni • 2016New .	Jersey
Rev. Richard A. Sitzmann • 2012	Iowa
Rev. Charles D. Skok • 2012Washi	ngton
Rev. Richard S. Sniezyk • 1987F	lorida
Ms. M. C. Soares • 2016Cali	fornia
Mr. and Mrs. John W. Spollen • 1982 New	v York
Mrs. Martina Stoeckl • 2012Nev	v York
Mrs. Lucille F. Sullivan • 2016Massach	usetts
Rev. John J. Sullivan • 1987	Ohio
Ms. Jill Szawara • 2016Nev	v York
Ms. Mary Jane Terrell • 2015Nev	v York
Mr. and Mrs. Ray Terry • 2014 Teni	ıessee
Mr. Michael J. Thompson • 1992 Pennsy	lvania
Ms. Lynn B. Tidgwell • 2014Conne	ecticut
Mr. William R. Toller • 2008Massach	usetts

Mr. and Mrs. Enrique Torres • 1994Florida
$Mr.  Christopher  Treado \bullet 2015Virginia$
Mr. Robert D. Tuerk • 1988Illinois
Dr. June Tyler • 2016 Georgia
Dr. and Mrs. Stephen Upham • 1994Connecticut
Mr. Roy Van Brunt • 2012Florida
Mr. Robert Venable • 2008Indiana
Mr. Bernard J. Verkamp • 1987Indiana
Dr. Julio Vidaurrazaga • 2004Puerto Ricc
Mr. and Mrs. Eugene P. Vukelic • 2003 New York
Mr. and Mrs. Charles F. Wall • 2001 Georgia
Mr. James Wallace, Jr. • 2015California
Most Rev. Emil A. Wcela • 1990 New York
Rev. Msgr. Donald Webber • 2015California
Mr. Robert Weickert • 2010North Carolina
Mr. and Mrs. John J. Weis • 2012New Jersey
Ms. Lucy Wilde • 2002Texas
Mr. David C. Wilmot • 2015 Missour
Mr. Dennis Wilson • 2015Washington
Mrs. Linda Nowakowski Winter • 2004 Missour
Francis Zipple & Kathleen Zipple • 2016Miss

# THE AVERY DULLES ASSOCIATES

\$150-\$299

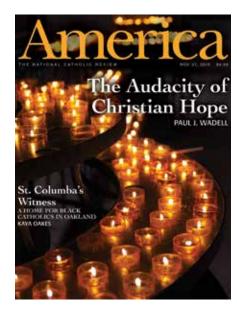
Mr. and Mrs. John J. Abbott • 2003 Massachusetts
Dr. Patricia Abernethy • 2014 Delaware
Miss Lillian Adami • 1987 Pennsylvania
Mr. Emmett J. Agoglia • 2000 New York
Mr. and Mrs. Anthony C. Albrecht • 1993Maryland
Mrs. Mary M. Albright • 2014Ohio
Mrs. Roenna Alegre • 2015California
Mr. and Mrs. Michael Allocca • 1987 New York
Mr. and Mrs. Joseph P. Amato • 2016 New York
Rev. Richard J. Ament • 2009Iowa
Mr. Robert G. Anders • 2012Maryland
Mr. Peter J. Andes • 1995 New York
Mr. Paul J. Angelis • 2013Illinois
Mr. Benedict G. Archer • 1994California
Mr. Phillip Arellano • 1991California
Mrs. Louella R. Armstrong • 2005 New York
Mr. Christopher Arsement, C.P.A. • 2013 Louisiana
Mr. Christopher Arsement, C.P.A. • 2013 Louisiana
$\label{eq:mr.christopher} \mbox{Arsement, C.P.A.} \   \bullet \   2013 \   \mbox{Louisiana}$ $\mbox{Rev. George Aschenbrenner, S.J.} \   \bullet \   1993\   \mbox{Pa.}$
Mr. Christopher Arsement, C.P.A. • 2013 Louisiana Rev. George Aschenbrenner, S.J. • 1993Pa. Howard J. Aylward, Jr., M. D. • 2007Pa.
Mr. Christopher Arsement, C.P.A. • 2013 Louisiana Rev. George Aschenbrenner, S.J. • 1993
Mr. Christopher Arsement, C.P.A. • 2013 Louisiana Rev. George Aschenbrenner, S.J. • 1993
Mr. Christopher Arsement, C.P.A. • 2013 Louisiana Rev. George Aschenbrenner, S.J. • 1993
Mr. Christopher Arsement, C.P.A. • 2013 Louisiana Rev. George Aschenbrenner, S.J. • 1993
Mr. Christopher Arsement, C.P.A. • 2013 Louisiana Rev. George Aschenbrenner, S.J. • 1993
Mr. Christopher Arsement, C.P.A. • 2013 Louisiana Rev. George Aschenbrenner, S.J. • 1993
Mr. Christopher Arsement, C.P.A. • 2013 Louisiana Rev. George Aschenbrenner, S.J. • 1993

Mr. & Mrs. Edward C. Barnidge, Jr. • 2005 Mo.i
Ms. Catherine Barrack • 2013California
Mr. and Mrs. Thomas J. Barrett • 2012Alaska
Miss Janice A. Barry • 2004New Jersey
Mr. Adolph J. Barsanti • 2003Virginia
Mr. Vincent Bartolini • 2013Rhode Island
Dr. and Mrs. William E. Battle • 2004Maryland
Mr. Michael Behan • 2016New York
Mr. and Mrs. Paul O. Behrends • 1990Maryland
Mr. Raymond J. Behrendt • 2001Illinois
Rev. Paul Belhumeur • 2016Connecticut
Ms. Victoria M. Bell • 2016Maryland
Dr. Angela A. Bennett • 1997New York
Dr. and Mrs. John C. Bennett • 1994California
Ms. Carolyn K. Bensel • 1988Massachusetts
Mr. Charles J. & Mrs. Maryann C. Bentz • 1990 Pa.
Mr. Joseph Benz • 2015Connecticut
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Rev. Albert J. Berner • 1987New Jersey
Rev. Amelio J. Bertelli, Jr. • 2005 Massachusetts
Mr. and Mrs. Robert H. Bichler • 2016 Wisconsin
Mr. Floyd R. Bielski • 2016 Pennsylvania
Ms. Rosemary E. Binon • 2005Ohio
Deacon and Mrs. Leo T. Bistak • 1989Ohio
Mr. Joseph A. Blasko • 2015 Michigan
Mr. and Mrs. Peter M. Blasucci • 2010 New York

Rev. Robert H. Blondell • 2016 Michigan
Mrs. Sharon Blumenthal • 2015 Pennsylvania
Rev. John A. Boehning • 2006New York
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Dr. Robert F. Brady, Jr. • 2006Maryland
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Rev. Raymond A. Brenner • 2003Indiana
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Ms. Sarah Bresniker • 2015California
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Rev. David E. Brinkmoeller • 2000Ohio
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Ms. Sandra Brown • 2016 Louisiana
Ms. Mary A. Bruemmer • 1991 Missouri
Rev. Francis E. Bryan • 2008Indiana
Ms. Lisa Bryan • 2016 Pennsylvania
Rev. Jerome A. Brzezinski • 2003 Michigan
Ms. Theresa Krolikowski Buck • 1993West Virginia
Dr. and Mrs. Louis V. Buckley • 1997Connecticut
Rev. Stephen Bulfer • 2016California

$Mr. William  Bulger \bullet 2016Massachusett$
Mr. Paul J. Buras • 2016Louisian:
Dr. and Mrs. James D. Burke • 2003 Pennsylvania
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Dr. and Mrs. Karl W. Butzer • 2001Texas
Mrs. Eileen K. Byrne • 1983Illinoi
Rev. Edward Byrne • 2006New York
Mr. Joseph J. Byrne • 2012Massachusett
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Mr. Pat W. Camerino • 1983Texa:
Mr. Bernard J. Campbell, C.S.P. • 2005
Ms. Jane S. Campbell • 2013 New York
Mr. and Mrs. John J. Campbell • 1988California
Mr. Paul V. Carey, Jr. • 2014
Rev. Robert J. Carleton • 2016California
Mrs. Lois H. Carnes • 2002California
Mr. Ben Carnevale • 2016Illinoi
Rev. Joseph C. Carolin • 2012 Pennsylvania
Sister Clarice M. Carroll • 2013Mississipp
Ms. Grace A. Carroll • 1980New Jersey
Dr. and Mrs. Harry D. Carrozza • 1982 Arizona
$Mr. William  Carruth \bullet 2016Massachusett$
Ms. Barbara Carson • 2016Ohio
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Mr. Edward J. Carville • 1982California
Drs. Cay John M. Casey, M.D. • 1988California
Ms. Patricia A. Casey • 1996Massachusett
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$Mr.\ Trent\ B.\ Chambers \bullet 2016Missour$
$Ms.GertrudChampe \bullet 2015Maine$
$Ms.\ Margaret\ R.\ Charles \bullet 2007Massachusett$
Rev. John F. Child • 1994 Michigan
Dr. Thomas Chisholm • 2009Wisconsin
Rev. Msgr. Joseph Ciampaglio • 2012New Jerse
Mr. and Mrs. Emil A. Ciccoretti • 2013N.C
Mr. Robert M. Ciesielski • 2012New Yorl
Col. Dennis E. Clancey, U.S.M.C. • 1988Virginia
Msgr. Douglas P. Clancy • 2014Connecticu
Ms. Meghan Clark • 2012New Yorl
Mr. and Mrs. M. Robert Clark • 2016 California
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Mr. Rodolfo & Mrs. Carlota Colberg • 2002 P.R
Mr. Ronald L. Cole • 1987Indiana
Rev. Joseph M. Collier • 1996
Mrs. Bradley Collins • 2015Florida
Mr. Daniel F. Collins • 2003Illinoi
Ms. Patricia M. Collins • 1994 Maine

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Mr. and Mrs. Daniel F. Collopy • 1991D.C.
Mr. and Mrs. Francis W. Collopy • 1996 Colorado
Rev. Edward A. Colohan • 2001Connecticut
Mr. R. Keith Colvin • 2016 Louisiana
Rev. James Commyn • 2015 Michigan
Mr. Michael J. Conk • 2012Virginia
Mr. Donald A. Connolly • 2005Maryland
Mr. Gerald Connolly • 2016New York
Rev. Mark Connolly • 2016Connecticut
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Rev. Robert L. Connors • 1998Massachusetts



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Ms. Clare Costello • 2013New York
Dr. Paul Cottle • 2014Florida
Mr. Fred G. Cowden, Jr. • 1997New Jersey
Rev. Richard D. Coy • 2014 Tennessee
Mr. Timothy H. Cronin • 2016Connecticut
Ms. Judith H. Crosson • 2015Colorado
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Mr. Richard & Mrs. Mary Beth Currie • 2014 N.J.
Mr. and Mrs. Robert A. Cushman • 2014 Montana
Mr. Richard F. Czaja • 2006New York
Ms. Carleen Czajka • 2016 Michigan
Ms. Joan T. Dabelko • 2014New York
Mr. Steven J. Damozonio • 2002California
Ms. Jaime Dance • 2014Connecticut
Mr. Alice E. Daniel • 2014Ohio
Mr. Joseph and Mrs. Mona Dasbach • 2016 Md.
Mr. Peter Davis • 2016Arizona

Ms. Judith M. Davis • 1996Indiana
Mr. Antonio J. De Varona • 2014Florida
Mr. Joseph E. and Mrs. Dalene B. Dean • 2015 N.Y.
Rev. Joseph Deane • 2008Texas
Mrs. Katherine E. DeBacker • 2008Colorado
Dechant-Hughes & Associates, Inc • 2015Illinois
Ms. Rosemary DeJulio • 2016New York
Mr. Richard P. Delaney • 1988Texas
Ms. Carlene Demiany • 2015Connecticut
Mr. and Mrs. John B. Denihan • 2016Illinois
Rev. Richard Deshaies • 2015Massachusetts
Ms. Mary Ann Deskins • 1992Kansas
Sr. Joanne Desmond • 2015 Delaware
Mr. Richard Dey • 2012California
Ms. Bernadette Dierkes • 2015 Pennsylvania
Mr. and Mrs. Digan • 2014Indiana
Ms. Jody DiMarzo • 2016New York
Mr. Paul J. DiNapoli • 2016Ohio
Mr. John M. Dister • 2009Virginia
Mr. and Mrs. Edward Dobransky • 2016.Connecticut
Rev. Eugene J. Doda, Jr. • 2014
Mr. & Mrs. Charles F. & Helen A. Dolan • 2006 N.Y.
Mr. and Mrs. Richard W. Doney • 1991 New York
Mr. and Mrs. John G. Donohue • 2004Florida
Ms. Margaret Donohue • 2015Texas
Mr. and Mrs. Michael Donohue • 2016Texas
Ms. Dorothy A. Donovan • 2010 Massachusetts
Mr. and Mrs. James P. Dougherty • 2010Indiana
Ms. Helen Dougherty • 2016New Jersey
Mr. Joseph C. Doyle • 2016New Jersey
Mr. F. Paul Driscoll • 2016
Ms. Jane Driscoll • 2016
Mr. Michael E. Driscoll • 1994Connecticut
Mr. Thomas M. Driscoll • 2008New York
Rev. Msgr. Leon Duesman • 2007 Texas
Rev. John P. Duffell • 1988New York
Ms. Maureen Duffy • 2016Ohio
Mr. and Mrs. Anthony J. Dunleavy • 2006
Rev. George E. Dunn • 2014Colorado
Mr. John R. Dunne • 2004New York
Mr. and Mrs. Joseph F. Dunne • 2015 Missouri Mr. Stephen P. Dunphy • 2013
1 1 2
Dr. Pierre Durand • 2006
Mr. William Durbin • 2015Maryland
Mr. Paul V. Dwyer • 2005Florida
Rev. William J. Eagan, S.J. • 2008Connecticut
Mr. Paul Eason • 2016Maryland
Rev. Douglas Ebert • 2015
Mr. Michael A. Eck • 1996 District of Columbia
Mr. Bill Edelen • 2016Kentucky
Mr. Harry A. Eick • 2007 Michigan
Mr. James Eisele • 2015 Michigan
Rev. Msgr. William E. Elliott • 2012California
Dr. Edward A. Ellis • 1991Florida

Rev. James L. Empereur, S.J. • 20141exas
Mr. Michael A. Erdek • 2008Maryland
Ms. Nancy J. Erhardt • 2015 Michigan
Col. Charles R. Erlinger • 2014Texas
Mr. Anthony F. & Mrs. Eileen Essaye • 2000 D.C.
Ms. Kelly S. Fairweather • 2012 New York
Mr. Nicholas Falco • 1989New York
Rev. Thomas G. Fanta • 2003Ohio
Mr. R. Foss Farrar • 2008Kansas
Fathers of the Society of Jesus • 2014 New Mexico
Mr. Stephen J. Fearon • 1989 New York
Mr. Patrick Fernando • 2016Ontario
Ms. Gilda Ferrara • 2009 New York
Mr. Peter M. Ferro • 2014Illinois
Mr. and Mrs. John A. Finch • 2016California
Ms. Barbara Fink • 2006Ohio
Rev. Charles H. Fischer • 2000 Michigan
Mr. Richard J. Fishbune • 2012Minnesota
Mr. & Mrs. Thomas G. Fitzgerald, Sr. • 2012 Md.
Ms. Jacqueline Fitzgerald • 1993Illinois
•
Denis Fitzgibbons &
Lisa Navarro-Fitzgibbons • 2014Ariz.
Rev. Msgr. Thomas D. Flach • 2015Illinois
Mr. John L. Flannery • 1993Connecticut
Ms. Barbara Flynn • 2015Hawaii
Mr. Charles Flynn • 2014New York
Ms. Eileen Flynn • 2016Maryland
Ms. Mary Margaret Flynn • 2016California
Ms. Mary Margaret Flynn • 2016California Mr. Patrick M. Folan • 1987Massachusetts
Mr. Patrick M. Folan • 1987 Massachusetts
Mr. Patrick M. Folan • 1987Massachusetts Mr. and Mrs. John Fontana • 2003Illinois
Mr. Patrick M. Folan • 1987Massachusetts Mr. and Mrs. John Fontana • 2003Illinois Dr. Mary Louise Formato • 2015New York
Mr. Patrick M. Folan • 1987Massachusetts Mr. and Mrs. John Fontana • 2003Illinois Dr. Mary Louise Formato • 2015New York Mr. William J. Fortune • 2001Colorado
Mr. Patrick M. Folan • 1987

Mr. and Mrs. Aaron W. Godfrey • 20	03 New York
Ms. Nathalie Godinot • 2016	Indiana
Mr. and Mrs. Robert F. Goeke • 2006	.Massachusetts
Mr. & Mrs. Rudolf & Carolyn Ann Go	oetz • 1995Mich.
Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence P. Goldschm	
Deacon and Mrs. Robert Gontcharul	k • 2004 N.Y.
Mr. Geoffrey Goodale • 2016	Massachusetts
Mr. Michael R. Goonan • 2003	New York
Mr. and Mrs. Horace C. Gordon, Jr. •	1989Florida
Rev. David H. Gosnell • 2014	Indiana
Rev. Louis J. Gould • 2004	Massachusetts
Mrs. Frances S. Grace • 1999	Wisconsin
Mr. Todd A. Graff • 2009	Minnesota
Mr. and Mrs. Jake and Ruth Graves •	2000Iowa
Ms. Marita Green • 2013	Pennsylvania
Mr. William J. Green • 2013	Pennsylvania
Ms. Peggy Grossman • 2015	Illinois
Ms. Marianna N. Guido • 2013	New York
Mr. J. Ferrel Guillory • 1998	North Carolina
Dr. M. K. Gumerlock • 1997	Oklahoma
Rev. James A. Habelwitz • 2007	Wisconsin
Mr. John W. Hall • 2009	New Jersey
Mr. Edward Hallinan • 2016	-
Ms. Lucille M. Hammes • 2014	-
Rev. Joseph F. Hanley • 1989	
Rev. William Hanley • 1995	
Ms. Janet Hannon • 2012	
Ms. Martha Hanns • 2012	
Mr. Thomas J. Hanratty • 2006	
Mr. Vernon Harkins • 2016	
Mr. and Mrs. Robert and Joan Harpe	
Rev. Joseph D. Harrington • 2009	
Mr. and Mrs. Edward J. Harrington	
Rev. Msgr. Robert M. Harris • 2005	
Dr. Timothy Hartnagel • 1987	
Mr. James J. Hastings • 2003	
Rev. Robert Hawkins • 2002	-
Rev. Robert L. Hayden • 2009	
Mr. Eugene M. Hayes • 2012	
Mr. Dennis M. Healy • 2006	_
Rev. Philip A. Hearn • 2009	
Ms. Grace E. Heising • 2016	
Mr. James G. Heller • 2008	
Mr. Joseph Henchey • 2014	_
Mr. Robert & Mrs. Joan Hennemeye	-
•	
Rev. Douglas J. Hennessy • 1995 Mr. & Mrs. David & Lynda Hennon •	
Rev. Patrick E. Hensy • 2014	
Rev. John C. Hergenrother • 1992	
Mr. Jose L. Hernando • 2014	
Mr. Andrew J. Hernon • 2005	
Mr. Patrick Heslin • 2016	
Mr. and Mrs. Richard A. Hibey • 199	
Mr. and Mrs. Kevin Higgins • 2014	
Mr and Mrs Ralph P Higgins Jr • 2	2014 Ohio

Rev. James L. Empereur, S.J. • 2014Texas	Mr. and Mrs. Aaron W. Godfrey • 2003 New York	Mr. Robert Hilderbrand • 2016Florida
Mr. Michael A. Erdek • 2008Maryland	Ms. Nathalie Godinot • 2016Indiana	Mrs. William Hill • 2015 Pennsylvania
Ms. Nancy J. Erhardt • 2015 Michigan	Mr. and Mrs. Robert F. Goeke • 2006 . Massachusetts	Mr. and Mrs. Robert Himmelberg • 2016 New York
Col. Charles R. Erlinger • 2014Texas	$\operatorname{Mr.} \& \operatorname{Mrs.} \operatorname{Rudolf} \& \operatorname{Carolyn} \operatorname{Ann} \operatorname{Goetz} \bullet 1995 \operatorname{Mich.}$	Dr. Katherine Hirschboeck, Ph. D. • 2014 Arizona
Mr. Anthony F. & Mrs. Eileen Essaye • 2000D.C.	Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence P. Goldschmidt • 1987 Va.	Mr. Patrick J. Hogan • 2016New York
Ms. Kelly S. Fairweather • 2012New York	Deacon and Mrs. Robert Gontcharuk • 2004 N.Y.	Rev. David Holloway • 2013 Missouri
Mr. Nicholas Falco • 1989 New York	Mr. Geoffrey Goodale • 2016Massachusetts	Rev. Edward J. Holterhoff • 2012California
Rev. Thomas G. Fanta • 2003Ohio	Mr. Michael R. Goonan • 2003New York	Mr. Bob Hubbard • 2016Arizona
Mr. R. Foss Farrar • 2008Kansas	Mr. and Mrs. Horace C. Gordon, Jr. • 1989Florida	Mr. Thomas P. Huber • 2012Hawaii
Fathers of the Society of Jesus • 2014 New Mexico	Rev. David H. Gosnell • 2014Indiana	Mr. Scott Huizenga • 2016 Michigan
Mr. Stephen J. Fearon • 1989New York	Rev. Louis J. Gould • 2004Massachusetts	Mr. Kenneth L. Hull • 2013 Michigan
Mr. Patrick Fernando • 2016Ontario	Mrs. Frances S. Grace • 1999 Wisconsin	Mr. Joshua Hull • 2016Maryland
Ms. Gilda Ferrara • 2009New York	Mr. Todd A. Graff • 2009Minnesota	Mr. Christopher Humphrey • 2016California
Mr. Peter M. Ferro • 2014Illinois	Mr. and Mrs. Jake and Ruth Graves • 2000Iowa	Mr. John Hunt • 2014California
Mr. and Mrs. John A. Finch • 2016California	Ms. Marita Green • 2013 Pennsylvania	Mr. and Mrs. Branson Hunter • 2015Texas
Ms. Barbara Fink • 2006Ohio	Mr. William J. Green • 2013 Pennsylvania	Dr. John Hurley • 2015Virginia
Rev. Charles H. Fischer • 2000 Michigan	Ms. Peggy Grossman • 2015Illinois	Mr. & Mrs. Leroy & Virginia L. Hushak • 2002Ohio
Mr. Richard J. Fishbune • 2012Minnesota	Ms. Marianna N. Guido • 2013 New York	Rev. Leon Hutton • 2004California
Mr. & Mrs. Thomas G. Fitzgerald, Sr. • 2012 Md.	Mr. J. Ferrel Guillory • 1998North Carolina	Ms. Theresa Inocencio • 2016California
Ms. Jacqueline Fitzgerald • 1993Illinois	Dr. M. K. Gumerlock • 1997Oklahoma	Mr. Frank P. Iovine • 1995New York
Denis Fitzgibbons &	Rev. James A. Habelwitz • 2007Wisconsin	Mr. and Mrs. Harold M. Isbell • 2000 California
Lisa Navarro-Fitzgibbons • 2014Ariz.	Mr. John W. Hall • 2009New Jersey	Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Iwobi • 2016New York
Rev. Msgr. Thomas D. Flach • 2015Illinois	Mr. Edward Hallinan • 2016 Pennsylvania	Ms. M. F. Jablonski • 2016Illinois
Mr. John L. Flannery • 1993Connecticut	Ms. Lucille M. Hammes • 2014California	Rev. Robert J. Jallas • 1994Illinois
Ms. Barbara Flynn • 2015Hawaii	Rev. Joseph F. Hanley • 1989 South Carolina	Ms. Mary Janicki • 2016California
Mr. Charles Flynn • 2014 New York	Rev. William Hanley • 1995Florida	Mrs. Louise M. Januzzi, P/A • 1990New Jersey
Ms. Eileen Flynn • 2016Maryland	Ms. Janet Hannon • 2012New York	Dr. Lurline Jennings • 2016
Ms. Mary Margaret Flynn • 2016	Ms. Martha Hanns • 2012 Arizona	Mr. Michael Jennings • 2016 Louisiana
Mr. Patrick M. Folan • 1987 Massachusetts	Mr. Thomas J. Hanratty • 2006Illinois	The Jesuits at Boston College • 2016Massachusetts
Mr. and Mrs. John Fontana • 2003Illinois	Mr. Vernon Harkins • 2016Washington	Mr. and Mrs. James T. Johnson • 2008 California
Dr. Mary Louise Formato • 2015 New York	Mr. and Mrs. Robert and Joan Harper • 1987 Calif.	Dr. Lucie Johnson • 2016Minnesota
Mr. William J. Fortune • 2001Colorado	Rev. Joseph D. Harrington • 2009Montana	Dr. Carium Joseph • 1993 South Carolina
Ms. Carolyn D. Foster • 2003	Mr. and Mrs. Edward J. Harrington • 2015Mass.	Mr. and Mrs. J. R. Joy • 2010
Mr. David Fowler • 2014Texas	Rev. Msgr. Robert M. Harris • 2005 New York	Mr. Patrick C. Joyce • 1987Maryland
Dr. R. John Fox, Jr. • 1987Texas	Dr. Timothy Hartnagel • 1987Alberta	Ms. Susan T. Kaemmerlen • 2008Rhode Island
Mr. Bertram F. Frederick • 2007Florida	Mr. James J. Hastings • 2003Maryland	Mr. and Mrs. Robert & Kay Kaiser • 2016 Missouri
Ms. Mary Frontiera • 2016	Rev. Robert Hawkins • 2002Rhode Island	Mr. Peter P. Kalac • 2003New Jersey
Mr. Vincent T. Gaglione • 1992New York	Rev. Robert L. Hayden • 2009New York	Ms. Ruby J. Kammerer • 2014Montana
Ms. Mary Gallo • 2012	Mr. Eugene M. Hayes • 2012	Mr. Jeffrey Kamradt • 2016Connecticut
Dr. and Mrs. Efrain Garcia • 1997Texas	Mr. Dennis M. Healy • 2006Texas	Mr. Arthur W. Kane • 2007Florida
Most Rev. James H. Garland, D.D. • 1991 Michigan	Rev. Philip A. Hearn • 2009 New York	Rev. George J. Kane • 1993Illinois
Ms. Kathleen T. Garry • 2003 New York	Ms. Grace E. Heising • 2016Florida	Donald Kapa & Monica Armstrong • 2015Tenn.
Mr. Peter J. Gaspeny • 2014 Michigan	Mr. James G. Heller • 2008 Michigan	Ms. Jane C. Karpick • 2016Virginia
Ms. Elizabeth Gavula • 2001 Pennsylvania	Mr. Joseph Henchey • 2014New Jersey	Chaplain Frans R. Kasteel • 1996
Mr. Walter W. Gaylor • 2016	Mr. Robert & Mrs. Joan Hennemeyer • 2006 Md.	
-	Rev. Douglas J. Hennessy • 1995Illinois	Ms. Patti-Anne Kay • 2016 British Columbia Mr. Harry W. Keaty • 2005 Washington
Mr. Eric Geiser & Mrs. Leslie Geiser • 2015 Mich.	Mr. & Mrs. David & Lynda Hennon • 2015 Calif.	• •
Most Rev. Peter L. Gerety • 1993New Jersey	Rev. Patrick E. Hensy • 2014	Mr. Gerald Keenan & Ms. Katherine Janega • 2015Ill.
Deacon and Mrs. Paul A. Gifford • 1994Maryland		Dr. and Mrs. Joseph H. Keffer • 2015. North Carolina  Poy James C. Kelly • 2008
Rev. Michael E. Giglio • 1993Florida  Mc Dorothy Cillan • 2000	Rev. John C. Hergenrother • 1992 Wisconsin	Rev. James G. Kelly • 2008New York
Ms. Dorothy Gillan • 2009	Mr. Jose L. Hernando • 2014	Mrs. Mary Ann T. Kelly-Wright • 2002Minnesota
Mr. Thomas J. Ginella • 2016	Mr. Andrew J. Hernon • 2005	Mr. and Mrs. William J. Kendrick • 2002Florida
Mr. and Mrs. James C. Giotis • 2016New Jersey	Mr. Patrick Heslin • 2016Florida	Mr. John J. Kenny • 2003
Mr. James Glaze • 2015	Mr. and Mrs. Richard A. Hibey • 1997	Kentucky Jesuit Mission • 2015 Kentucky
Mr. John P. Gleason • 2006Illinois	Mr. and Mrs. Kevin Higgins • 2014Colorado	Ms. Pamela Keogh • 2015
Dr. and Mrs. Michael Gliatto, M.D. • 2010Pa.	Mr. and Mrs. Ralph P. Higgins, Jr. • 2014Ohio	Mr. Kenn Kern • 2015 New York

Phillip Kerwin & Alyssa Dudkowski •2003 Wis.
Rev. Ronald M. Ketteler • 1988Kentucky
Ms. Mary Keyes • 2016Maryland
Mr. Francis J. Kicsar • 2002Wisconsin
Dr. David P. & Mrs. Patricia O. Killen • 2007 Wash.
Ms. Mary S. Kim • 2016Washington
Mr. & Mrs. Stephen & Patricia Kiscoan • 2016 Neb.
Ms. Petra E. Kiser • 2015New Hampshire
Mr. & Mrs. Fredrick & Angela Kleinbub • 2016. Calif.
Mr. Denny Klosterman • 2015 Missouri
Mrs. Thomas S. Knight, Jr. • 1990Connecticut
Mr. Kilian Knittel • 2015Indiana
Mr. Leonard A. Knobbe • 2006 Missouri
Mr. Kenneth D. Knuth • 2006Minnesota
Fr. Robert Kolenski • 2012 Michigan
Mr. Stanley P. Kopacz • 1987 Pennsylvania
Mr. John N. Kotre • 2001 Michigan
Dr. and Mrs. John F. Krager, Jr. • 2009 Nebraska
Rev. Msgr. Gerard C. Krieg • 2016 New York
Dr. and Mrs. Matthew F. Kuluz, M. D. • 1983 Miss.i
Dr. and Mrs. Paul J. Kurtin • 2003Minnesota
Mr. Michael R. Kuse • 2016Illinois
Mr. Ludwig Kuttner • 2014 Arizona
Mr. & Mrs. Lawrence & Peggy Kwacala • 2014Ill.
Mr. Christopher Lane • 2000Colorado
Ms. Linda Lapos • 2015 Pennsylvania
Ms. Barbara A. Larsen • 2003
Rev. Kenneth E. Lasch • 2003New Jersey
Rev. Edward J. Lauden • 2014 Louisiana
Ms. Florence Laureira • 2012Florida
Ms. Mary Jo Lavin • 2005
Mr. and Mrs. Robert A. Leathers • 2009California
Ms. Barbara A Lee • 2016New York
Mr. and Mrs. Peter G. Leemputte • 1999Illinois
Mrs. Ann G. Lefever • 1997New York
Dr. Joseph Legan & Mrs. Susan E. Legan • 2015 Va.
Mr. Joseph P. Lehman • 2013Virginia
Most Rev. John J. Leibrecht • 1991 Missouri
Mr. Russell Lemker • 2015
Mr. Ronald J. and Mrs. Linda Lesko • 2009 Maine
His Eminence William Cardinal Levada • 2014 Calif.
Mr. John Levonik • 2015 New York
Mr. Patrick R. Leyden • 2015 Pennsylvania
Mr. John P. Leydon • 2015Massachusetts
Mr. and Mrs. James H. Lienesch • 1989Maryland
Mr. & Mrs. David L. & Kathy A. Lindell • 2016 Calif.
Ms. Judith A. Linden • 2015New York
Ms. Nancy E. Lindsay • 2008 District of Columbia
Rev. Frank E. Lioi • 2008New York
Mr. Albin Lipold • 2014Florida
Mr. & Mrs. Theodore & Eve Lippold • 2015Mass.
Mr. and Mrs. John and Dolores Loftus • 2002 N.Y
Mr. and Mrs. Anthony Lombardi, Jr. • 2004Colo.
Rev. Msgr. Alfred P. LoPinto • 1989 New York
Mr Donald I Lovac • 2015 Minnecota

Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth L. Lovasik • 1998Pa.
Mr. and Mrs. Frederick J. Lower, Jr. • 1989 Calif.
Ms. Jeanne Lubin • 2015New Jersey
Mr. and Mrs. Al and Mary Luckas • 1995 Wisconsin
Judge and Mrs. Alexander Lyerly • 2016N.C.
Sr. Claire Macdonald • 2004New York
Mr. Ian R. Macdougald • 2015Florida
Mr. Timothy MacGeorge • 2016Florida
Mr. Robert Mack • 2010Washington
Lt. Col. and Mrs. John F. MacKay, RET • 2013 Maine
Ms. Beatrice A. Mackenzie • 2010Connecticut
Mr. John B. Madden, Jr. • 1988 New York



Rev. John W. Madsen • 2012New York
Mrs. Mary Mager • 2015Illinois
Mr. and Mrs. James V. Maher • 1993 Pennsylvania
Mr. and Mrs. Michael J. Maher • 1997 New York
William Maher & Michelle Berberet • 2016Va.
Ms. Mary Ellen Mahon • 2015New Hampshire
$Mr.AnthonyP.Mahowald \bullet 2005Massachusetts$
Deacon Thomas Mallinger • 2015Texas
Ms. Susan Zaremba Malone • 2002New Jersey
Mr. and Mrs. Francis X. Maloney, Jr. $\bullet$ 2015Mass.
Mr. Brian J. Manning • 2014New York
Mr. Robert D. Mannix • 2001 Missouri
Ms. Janaan Manternach • 2013Iowa
Ms. Tanya Bastianich Manuali • 2014 New York
Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mariani • 1993 Massachusetts
Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mariani • 1993Massachusetts Dr. and Mrs. William H. Marmion • 2005.California
Dr. and Mrs. William H. Marmion • 2005 . California
Dr. and Mrs. William H. Marmion • 2005 .California Mrs. Lucine Marous • 1987 Pennsylvania
Dr. and Mrs. William H. Marmion • 2005 .California Mrs. Lucine Marous • 1987 Pennsylvania Mr. and Mrs. Paul Martin • 1988 Washington
Dr. and Mrs. William H. Marmion • 2005 .California Mrs. Lucine Marous • 1987

Mr. Mark J. McCabe • 1997 Pennsylvania
$Ms.\ Judy\ McCaffery \bullet 2015Florida$
Rev. Msgr. William J. McCaffrey • 2002R.I.
Mr. Donal F. McCarthy • 1991 New York
$Ms. \ Jean \ M. \ McCawley \bullet 2005Massachusetts$
Ms. Marie McConnell • 2012New York
Ms. Suzanne McDermott • 2015 New Hampshire
Mr. Robert H. McDonald • 2016 Pennsylvania
Mr. William McDonald • 2015Illinois
Dr. Gloria M. McDonnell, Ph.D. • 2005 New York
Dr. John R. McDonough • 1999Washington
Mr. Robert McDonough • 2014 Pennsylvania
Mary Ellen F. McEvily • 2014 New York
Mrs. Mary E. McGinley • 2015Connecticut
Mr. and Mrs. George McGinn • 2015Texas
Mr. John McGlynn • 2014Florida
Sr. Jean McGoff • 2011Indiana
Dr. Leonard F. McGovern • 2005Alabama
Desmond & Catherine McGowan • 2015N.Y.
Rev. Richard W. McGowan, S.J. • 1999 New Mexico
Hon. J. Kevin McKay • 1977 New York
Rev. Henry McKee • 2002 Pennsylvania
Ms. Amy McKenna • 2016Ohio
Mr. Arthur McKenna • 2014 New York
Mr. and Mrs. Michael McKenna • 2016Florida
Rev. Michael C. McKeon • 2001
Ms. Mary J. McLaughlin • 2005 Pennsylvania
Rev. James R. McLellan • 2012Massachusetts
Ms. Judith M. McMahon • 2016Rhode Island
Mr. William A. McNamara • 2008 Rhode Island
Mr. William J. McNulty • 2014Illinois
Mr. Matthew McPartland • 2016Florida
Mr. Edward McSweeney • 2013California
Dr. Carlos A. Medina • 2014
Mr. and Mrs. Dale R. Meers • 2009
Mr. Thomas Mehs • 2014Colorado
Mr. Thomas Mehs • 2014

Mr. Robert B. Moran • 1987California
Most Rev. Robert F. Morneau, D.D. • 1985 Wis.
Mr. James Morrill • 2008New York
Rev. Msgr. Philip D. Morris • 1995Florida
Mr. and Mrs. Richard B. Morris • 1983California
Ms. Patricia Mort • 2016 Missouri
Rev. Frank M. Mouch • 1989Florida
Mr. and Mrs. Barbara T. Mugnolo • 2016 New York
Mr. Kevin Mulcahy • 1995New Jersey
Mr. and Mrs. Dennis Mulvihill • 2010California
Mr. Brendan Murphy • 2014 Georgia
Mrs. A. Jane Murphy • 2000Massachusetts
Mrs. Joan B. Murphy • 2014Connecticut
Ms. Mollie Murphy • 2014Virginia
Ms. Patricia A. Murphy • 2016Virginia
Rev. William J. Murphy • 1988 Michigan
Dr. Francis J. Murray • 2014 Maine
Dr. Dorice M. Narins, Ph.D. • 2005 North Carolina
Mr. Nicholas J. Nastasi • 1986 Pennsylvania
Mr. Christopher F. Naughten • 2012Maryland
Mrs. Margaret M. Neckles • 2016 New York
Ms. Diane Neville • 2016 Michigan
Ms. Rose Nitz • 2010North Dakota
Ms. Colleen Noall • 2016New York
Mr. Joseph P. Nolan • 1997North Carolina
Mr. Robert E. Nolan • 2000Wisconsin
Mr. and Mrs. Dave Nona • 1985 Michigan
Ms. Eileen M. Norris • 2015Oregon
Mr. Bill and Mrs. Mary Novotny • 2015 Arizona
Oak Park Jesuit Community • 2016Illinois
Ms. Elizabeth Donnelly Oakes • 2016 Michigan
Ms. Brigid O'Brien • 2012New York
Mr. David O'Brien • 2016Massachusetts
Mrs. Francis J. O'Brien • 1982New Jersey
Rev. Leo P. O'Brien • 2008New York
Mr. and Mrs. Richard J. O'Brien • 1988 Nebraska
Rev. Paul T. O'Connell • 2012Massachusetts
Mr. John M. O'Connor • 1998Maryland
Mr. Kevin J. O'Connor • 2013Minnesota
Dr. Luke E. O'Connor • 2003Connecticut
Rev. Maurice J. O'Connor • 1999Massachusetts
Mr. and Mrs. William O'Connor • 2012 Delaware
Mr. Thomas L.P. O'Donnell • 1996 Massachusetts
Rev. William J.J. O'Donnell • 1996 Pennsylvania
Rev. Dr. Joseph P. Oechsle • 1993 Pennsylvania
Rev. Dr. Joseph P. Oechsle • 1993 Pennsylvania Ms. Kathleen P. O'Hagan • 2016 Illinois
Ms. Kathleen P. O'Hagan • 2016Illinois
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Ms. Kathleen P. O'Hagan • 2016Illinois Rev. Francis W. O'Hara • 2008Rhode Island
Ms. Kathleen P. O'Hagan • 2016Illinois Rev. Francis W. O'Hara • 2008Rhode Island Ms. Joan S. O'Hara • 2013New York
Ms. Kathleen P. O'Hagan • 2016

Mr. Robert Otter • 2014		
Mr. Richard J. Pabst, Jr. • 2016	Mr. Robert Otter • 2014	Illinois
Mr. Timothy J. Padgett • 2010	Gregory Otterson & Mary Ann Murphy •	2016Ohio
Mr. and Mrs. Antonio Padilla • 2016	Mr. Richard J. Pabst, Jr. • 2016	Illinois
Ms. Agnes Pambid • 2016	Mr. Timothy J. Padgett • 2010	Florida
Mr. and Mrs. Richard Pantaleo • 2013. Pennsylvanis Mrs. Martina G. Parauda • 1992	Mr. and Mrs. Antonio Padilla • 2016	Florida
Mrs. Martina G. Parauda • 1992	Ms. Agnes Pambid • 2016 Pe	ennsylvania
Dr. and Mrs. William P. Pare • 2000	Mr. and Mrs. Richard Pantaleo • 2013 . Pe	ennsylvania
Rev. Theodore J. Parker • 2014	Mrs. Martina G. Parauda • 1992	New Jersey
Ms. Anne Louise Parry • 1988	Dr. and Mrs. William P. Pare • 2000	Maryland
Mr. David I. Parsch • 2015	Rev. Theodore J. Parker • 2014	Michigan
Ms. Kay B. Partridge • 1988	Ms. Anne Louise Parry • 1988	Florida
Mr. and Mrs. Richard A. Paul • 2003	Mr. David I. Parsch • 2015	Michigan
Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Pawlus • 2014	Ms. Kay B. Partridge • 1988Ma	ssachusetts
Mr. Charles A. Pearson • 2015	Mr. and Mrs. Richard A. Paul • 2003	Michigan
Mr. and Mrs. John and Emma Pelissier • 2001	Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Pawlus • 2014	New Jersey
Mrs. Helen K. Penberthy • 2009	Mr. Charles A. Pearson • 2015	Washington
Deacon and Mrs. R. J. Penzenstadler • 2016 . Arizon: Rev. Richard A. Perfetto • 1993	Mr. and Mrs. John and Emma Pelissier • 2	2001Va.
Deacon and Mrs. R. J. Penzenstadler • 2016 . Arizon: Rev. Richard A. Perfetto • 1993	Mrs. Helen K. Penberthy • 2009	Virginia
Ms. Patricia A. Perica • 2016		
Ms. Patricia A. Perica • 2016	Rev. Richard A. Perfetto • 1993	Michigan
Mrs. Doris Pesci • 2007		
Mrs. Doris Pesci • 2007	Mr. Meredith Thomas Persinger • 2016W	est Virginia
Rev. David L. Peters • 1988	_	_
Deacon Joseph Peters • 2015		-
Mr. and Mrs. Drew M. Petersen, Jr. • 2009		
Mr. and Mrs. Steven C. Peterson • 2014	_	
Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Pettit • 1992		
Ms. Margaret K. Phillips • 2008		
Rev. Michael J. Phillips • 2005       New Yorl         Ms. Genia E. Picardo • 2016       California         Mr. Keldon S. Pickering • 2004       Indiana         Mr. John L. and Mrs. Mary K. Pickitt • 2008       N.C         Mr. James Picone • 2016       Connecticu         Dr. Pola J. Piotrowski, M. D. • 2009       Illinoi         Mr. and Mrs. Ronald L. Plue • 2012       California         Rev. Joseph W. Pokusa • 2010       New Jerse         Mr. John Polanin, Jr. • 2014       New Jerse         Ms. Suzanne Polen • 2001       Pennsylvania         Mr. Joseph D. Policano • 1982       New Yorl         Mr. Lantz and Mrs. Cathy Powell • 1983       Tennesse         Mr. James A. Prior, O.F.S. • 1994       Florida         Mr. Philip P. Pritt • 2016       Ohia         Rev. John T. Provost • 2016       New Yorl         Rev. Msgr. Eugene Prus • 2016       New Jerse         Dr. Peter Demuth & Ms. Karen Przypyszny • 2015 Ill         Ms. Catherine A. Quinn • 2015       Oregon         Ms. Florence E. Quinn • 2004       Virginia         Mr. Eugene C. Rainis • 1993       New Yorl	_	_
Ms. Genia E. Picardo • 2016		
Mr. Keldon S. Pickering • 2004	_	
Mr. John L. and Mrs. Mary K. Pickitt • 2008N.C Mr. James Picone • 2016		
Mr. James Picone • 2016	_	
Dr. Pola J. Piotrowski, M. D. • 2009       Illinoi         Mr. and Mrs. Ronald L. Plue • 2012       California         Rev. Joseph W. Pokusa • 2010       New Jerse         Mr. John Polanin, Jr. • 2014       New Jerse         Ms. Suzanne Polen • 2001       Pennsylvania         Mr. Joseph D. Policano • 1982       New Yorl         Mr. Lantz and Mrs. Cathy Powell • 1983       Tennesse         Mr. James A. Prior, O.F.S. • 1994       Florida         Mr. Philip P. Pritt • 2016       New Yorl         Rev. John T. Provost • 2016       New Jerse         Dr. Peter Demuth & Ms. Karen Przypyszny • 2015 Ill         Ms. Catherine A. Quinn • 2015       Oregoi         Ms. Florence E. Quinn • 2004       Virginia         Mr. Eugene C. Rainis • 1993       New Yorl		
Mr. and Mrs. Ronald L. Plue • 2012		
Rev. Joseph W. Pokusa • 2010		
Mr. John Polanin, Jr. • 2014		
Ms. Suzanne Polen • 2001	*	
Mr. Joseph D. Policano • 1982		
Mr. Lantz and Mrs. Cathy Powell • 1983 Tennesses         Mr. James A. Prior, O.F.S. • 1994		
Mr. James A. Prior, O.F.S. • 1994		
Mr. Philip P. Pritt • 2016		
Rev. John T. Provost • 2016		
Rev. Msgr. Eugene Prus • 2016New Jerse Dr. Peter Demuth & Ms. Karen Przypyszny • 2015Ill Ms. Catherine A. Quinn • 2015Oregon Ms. Florence E. Quinn • 2004Virgini Mr. Eugene C. Rainis • 1993New Yor		
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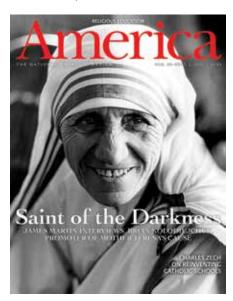
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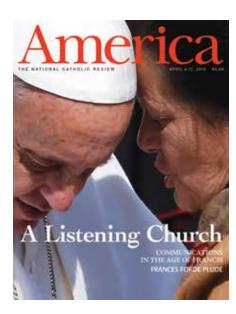
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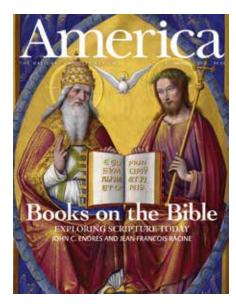
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# On Earth as It Is in Heaven

Readings: Gn 12:1-4; Ps 33; 2 Tm 1:8-10; Mt 17:1-9

Without some background, the Transfiguration can be a difficult text to understand. It relies on religious ideas that were common in the first century but have since faded away. One notion that many ancient peoples shared was that gods "glowed." Deities were refulgent with light and energy. Israel's neighbors drew this idea from their experience of the sun and the stars, which they believed to be the visible forms of heavenly beings. In Israel, this idea came from the belief that God's visible form contained elements of a thunderstorm, including clouds and a fiery, blinding radiance like lightning. These storm features made God's presence visible, and collectively they were called the kabod or "divine glory." This divine glory reflects off Moses' face and draws Elijah up to heaven. Behind today's Gospel is the belief that God had shared this divine glory with the Son of Man, who was coming to Earth to liberate Israel (Dn 7:14).

Also behind today's Gospel is the belief that mountain peaks lie on the border of heaven and earth. On high mountains, God can reveal in visions what the world looks

Just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life.
(Rom 6:4)

### PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

Have you ever seen a love so pure that you caught a glimpse of God's glory?

This Lent, how can you reveal God's love to the world?

like from a heavenly perspective. Today's Gospel records such a vision. Several motifs reveal that although Jesus and the apostles had not left the ground, they had entered a place more like the heavens. They saw a light as brilliant as the sun, they were covered by a cloud, and they encountered two men, Moses and Elijah, who many believed had been transported directly to the divine realm at the end of their lives. On this mountain God showed Peter, James and John what Jesus looks like in heaven: the Son bears the Father's refulgent divine glory.

One could be forgiven for wondering why we read this in Lent; the Transfiguration seems more at home in the Easter season. The way things look in heaven, however, is not how they appear on earth. The divine energy that in heaven makes Jesus glow appears on earth as divine love. As Jesus will show, divine love entails a commitment to the service of others even in the face of death. This is not human glory, which usually involves greed and ego and pride. What looks like divine glory in heaven is the same force that led Jesus to give up everything on the cross.

All Christians are called to reflect Christ's transfigured glory. The rite of baptism celebrated at the Easter Vigil, for which Lent is preparing us, alludes to this: "You have been enlightened by Christ. Walk always as children of the light." The light we pray for is the same as the love we learn in discipleship. Few Christians are called to reflect Christ's glory in a death like his, although we know that this is still a possibility. All Christians, however, are called to reveal a love like Christ's that gives up everything in service to our brothers and sisters, no matter the consequences. Glory in heaven might look like sacrifice on earth, but behind it all is the love that God offers us and dreams for us to share with each other.

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



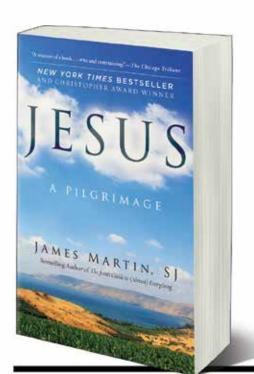
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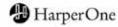
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# The Light of New Life

Readings: Ex 17:3-7; Ps 95; Rom 5:1-8; Jn 4:5-42

Greek Christians call the woman in today's Gospel St. Photine; Russian Christians call her St. Svetlana. Both names mean "bearer of light." Several stories of her life exist. One well-known account makes her a founder of the church in North Africa and a martyr under Nero. She reputedly spat in his face when he subjected her to grisly tortures and demanded that she sacrifice to idols. History preserves no evidence to corroborate these traditions, but they highlight a facet of today's Gospel that many often miss: She was one of Christ's first evangelists.

The strictness of ancient marital customs prompts one to wonder how she could have been married five times. Although the text does not say, it is plausible to suggest that she had spent at least part of her life in sexual slavery. The Samaritans, like the Jews, drew their laws from the Pentateuch. In Ex 21:7-11 one finds a law for concubines that could explain her situation. A financially desperate family could sell a daughter into slavery as a concubine for an Israelite man or his son. Her new master could not sell her to a foreigner, but if he or his son disliked her-and if her own father remained too poor to redeem her-her new master could sell her to another Israelite. Some concubines, like those in David's household, had care over important matters (see 2 Sm 15), but most were little more than household slaves who also provided sex, like Jacob's concubine Bilhah. A concubine was perpetually enslaved unless her master failed to provide her with food, clothing or conjugal rights, in which case she could go free. Much about the Samaritan woman fits this image. She seems to have won her freedom, but not before serving several men as a slave "wife."

Legal freedom is not spiritual freedom. John shows us a lonely woman. She is living with a man who has no permanent obligations to her. She scurries to the well in the heat of the day; others go at dawn and dusk. Most Christians can understand why Christ would desire to save such a person. What we might miss is that he did not send her away, admonishing her to avoid further sin. Instead, Christ makes her an evangelist, sending her out to call others to him.

Christ is able to accomplish within us far more than we can ask or imagine.

(Eph 3:20)

### **PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE**

How did Christ call me to a new life?

How can a selfless love free an enslaved soul in my family? Among my friends? In my world?

In his love, Jesus sees things in us that we do not see in ourselves. Last week, Matthew showed us that Jesus' love is radiance in heaven. This week, John shows that Jesus' love illumines our minds as well. Jesus calls his disciples to a life they cannot imagine for themselves. The woman in today's Gospel has a complicated and tragic past but becomes a wellspring of hope for her village. She experiences a foretaste of her own resurrection. The church reads her story during Lent, in preparation for the sacraments of initiation at Easter, because it is only as a result of Christ's death and resurrection, in which we share through baptism, that we can have similar encounters today. In every age, Christ's disciples come to him with their own heartbreak and depravity. The light of his dreams lifts us up and sends us out to bear his light to the world.

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

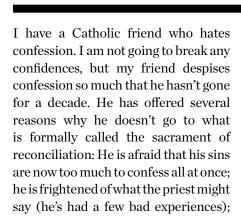


# Hate confession?

# Rediscovering the appeal of the sacrament

By James Martin

and he is too busy.



My friend is not the only person I've met who feels this way. Several years ago, while directing a retreat, I met a woman who said that she hadn't gone to confession for 20 years. Her reason was also an unpleasant experience with a priest during the sacrament. As I recall, he berated her for not coming in more frequently.

In response, I asked her: "If you had a bad experience with a physician, would you would never see a physician again?" But even after we talked about her experiences, she was hesitant to return. Our spiritual direction session was brief, and by the time our 20 minutes was up it was time for another retreatant. So I have no idea if she ever returned to the confessional.

Sometimes I feel nearly tonguetied in these situations. Not because I judge people in these situations to be bad Catholics, or because I don't know any helpful responses to these common roadblocks. Rather, it's because I go to confession frequently. Very frequently. And I like it.

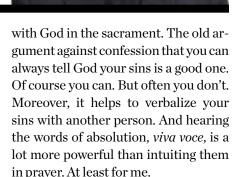
Admittedly, it's easier for me to do when I live in a house filled with priests, and especially when my spiritual director is a member of my community. If I ever feel burdened by sin, or even a sin, all I need to do is knock on someone's door and ask.

On the other hand, it's arguably harder, since these are men with whom I live and, in many instances, work. After confessing your sins to someone, you may see the fellow at breakfast the next morning or at an editorial meeting. But that has never bothered me, because I figure that anyone who lives or works with me already knows I am not perfect.

I often ponder what makes me more inclined to go to confession than the people I mentioned. I am certainly not any holier than anyone else—not by a long shot. It's not that I have fewer sins.

Maybe it's the frequency. I go to confession once a month, if not more. So I'm used to it. Consequently, it ceases to hold any conceivable fear. My situation is something like that of a person who has a fear of flying taking 50 flights in one year, and then suddenly realizing that he's comfortable on a plane. He knows there will inevitably be turbulence and can say, "I'm used to this. And it is not as bad as I thought it would be."

Sometimes I tell skittish Catholics how wonderful it feels to be honest



My comfort level may also stem from experiences with confession from the other side. When hearing confessions, and offering absolution, I can see how people feel unburdened. They exhale. They relax. They smile. And I can feel how grateful they are to be forgiven for something they thought was unforgivable. All that makes confession precious to me.

But mainly I like the way I feel afterward, as if God had given me another chance—which, of course, God has. And no matter if I'm hearing confessions or going to confession, I always think of what my theology professor, Peter Fink, S.J., once told our class: "Confession isn't about how bad you are, but how good God is."

I wish I could invite everyone who has stayed away to come back. And for returnees, I hope you hear some form of what I say to people who haven't been to confession for years: "Welcome back."

James Martin, S.J., is editor at large of America and the author of Seven Last Words: An Invitation to a Deeper Friendship With Jesus.

America (ISSN: 0002-7049) Copyright © 2017 by America Press, Inc., is published on Jan. 2, then biweekly beginning Jan. 23, with two special issues on April 24 and Oct. 23 by America Press, Inc., 33 West 60th St. 6th Floor, New York, NY 10023. Business and Editorial Offices: 33 West 60th St., 6th Floor New York, NY 10023, Accounting and Circulation Offices: America Press Inc., 33 West 60th St., 6th Floor New York, NY 10023. Call (201) 668-1400 to subscribe. Periodicals postego prices is pending at New York, NY. Send address changes to: America, P.O. Box 293159, Kettering, OH 45429.



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