

America

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RESUIT REVIEW OF FAITH AND CULTURE

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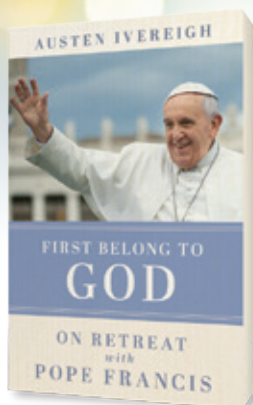
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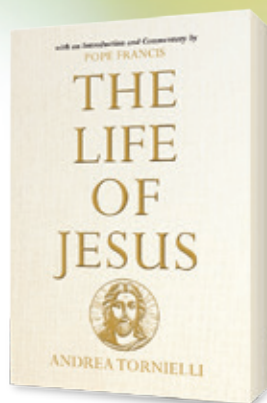
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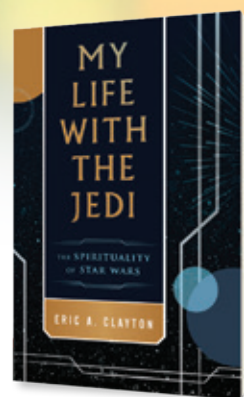
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The Gift of Doing the Same Thing Every Day

I first made the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius during my sophomore year at Boston College.

A Jesuit faculty member had been offering the retreat for other faculty members in a format known as the 19th Annotation, in which the retreatant prays for about an hour a day over the course of months in the course of regular daily life, instead of for 30 days straight through in silence. One of the lay faculty members who had made the retreat decided that he wanted to offer it for students, and four of us embarked on the retreat together.

In addition to praying an hour each day, we were asked to commit to meeting together once a week and going to daily Mass. This was easy enough to fit in, in a college student's schedule at a place like B.C. I remember counting at one point, and there were at least 12 weekday Mass options between chapels on campus and the parish next to it. It would be a stretch to say I was excited or eager to go to Mass every day, but I was definitely excited about the Exercises, because I had started to think about a Jesuit vocation. And I was not opposed to daily Mass—but it seemed initially more like a hoop to jump through for the sake of the retreat than something worth doing in its own right.

I have been going to daily Mass, as often as I can, for the last 27 years, more than half my life now.

There is a profound grace in submitting ourselves to a rhythm of time that we do not control. For half an hour, every day, daily Mass asked me to step into Tuesday of the 13th week in Ordinary Time, or Monday of the 2nd week of Lent, or the feast of the dedication of the Lateran Basilica, rather than the week before spring break or the last month of classes or a

day into the extension I asked for on that paper.

Liturgical time is unhurried, ordered and patient. It waits for us to enter in, because it is always there, turning in its own cycles from Advent to Lent to Easter to Ordinary Time. Liturgical time does the same thing over and over again—the same Eucharist every day, the same seasons every year, the same readings every three years on Sundays and every two years on weekdays. And because it does the same thing over and over again, it never gets old. Or to say it another way: Liturgical time does not *get* old because it is *already* both ancient and new, anchored to the depths of God's revelation in history and pointing toward its fulfillment.

Among his many gifts to the church, Benedict XVI always reminded us that the liturgy we celebrate is a participation in the greater cosmic liturgy. In *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, written before he became pope, he described liturgy's transcendence of time: "Today' embraces the whole time of the Church. And so in the Christian liturgy, we not only receive something from the past but become contemporaries with what lies at the foundation of that liturgy."

That is why, I think, stepping into a church can feel like stepping from a smaller space into a larger one, even as we cross through a door, under a roof and inside walls. We become contemporaries both with what is celebrated in that place, the Eucharistic liturgy's ongoing participation in Christ's paschal sacrifice, and also with all those who have participated in that prayer themselves. We step from hurriedness and lack of time into an abundance of it, a time that is full of possibility. Maybe that is also a hint to one of Pope

Francis' more cryptic phrases, that "time is greater than space."

When you read this column, whether in print or online, we will be in Lent. Most of us will be giving something up, or taking something on, aiming to make these 40 days a bit larger or more significant in our spiritual lives as we prepare for Easter. It is one of the most tangible ways that Catholics enter into liturgical time every year.

One of the reasons I have been thinking about how I learned to appreciate the rhythm of liturgical time is because we at America Media have been figuring out how to put the liturgical calendar into an app. Through the support of Lilly Endowment's Compelling Preaching Initiative, we are proud to be launching **America's** app for The Word, which presents our Scripture content in one place for subscribers. You'll find a wealth of resources for each Sunday of the liturgical year, along with daily Scripture reflections written by our staff and contributors.

To find The Word app, search your app store for "America Magazine: The Word," or visit americamagazine.org/wordapp for more information. Whether during Lent or anytime in the rest of the liturgical year, we hope it helps you pray and deepen your relationship with God.

Sam Sawyer, S.J.



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Performers exhibit a traditional dragon dance to welcome in the Chinese New Year during an audience at the Vatican on Feb. 2.

CNS photo/Vatican Media

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Cover: "The Risen Christ,"
 by William Hart McNichols
 Courtesy of William Hart McNichols

Does 'Fiducia Supplicans' deepen or confuse church teaching? Our readers respond.

On Dec. 18, 2023, the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith released “Fiducia Supplicans,” a declaration that allowed priests to give simple or pastoral blessings to couples in irregular situations, including those in same-sex relationships. In our February 2024 issue, **America’s** editors stated that the declaration does not change church teaching on marriage but allows the church to accompany all people who seek God’s blessing, writing, “It challenges those whose instinct is that true pastoral charity can be shown only by teaching hard moral truths and calling sinners to conversion.” Many readers agreed with the editors on “Fiducia Supplicans,” but others were skeptical about the declaration’s efficacy and impact on church unity.

Whenever L.G.B.T.Q. topics come up, I am reminded of how Jesus responded when the Pharisees dragged before him a woman accused of adultery. He didn’t interrogate her before he offered her the blessing of his presence, his gaze, his conversation and his instruction. He didn’t express concern about whether his gentleness toward her might be misconstrued. And he did not first demand that she repent. He just looked at her, loved her, then told her to go and sin no more. None of us should expect anything less from the church.

Laura Fratus

The editors write that under a focus on pastoral closeness, “the church always has a duty to accompany people who seek God’s blessing, even in morally complicated and imperfect situations.” I have yet to meet anybody who is not morally complicated or who lives in a perfect situation, certainly not in my mirror. This call to closeness should be good news to everybody. The editors also write that this call “challenges those who may assume that church teaching must change, or be on the way toward changing, in order for such accompaniment to be authentic.” Guilty as charged. I admit that I hope “Fiducia Supplicans” is a step in the right direction and that other steps are coming. That would make it much easier to convince some friends to come to Mass.

Gwen Murtha

I think most of the world is confused by this document. Entire bishops’ conferences are rejecting it, as are many bishops and priests throughout the world. Even some bishops are ignoring and violating “Fiducia Supplicans” and performing ritualized and planned ceremonies. If Pope Francis’ goal was to unify and clarify, he has failed to do so.

Vern Caldwell

The editors write: “How can the church unite clarity of teaching with pastoral closeness to people in their struggles? That challenge has been present throughout Pope Francis’ papal ministry and deserves deeper reflection beyond any single magisterial document.” We are called, I think, as individuals

and as a church to “experience the nearness of the Father, beyond all ‘merits’ and ‘desires,’” as stated in “Fiducia Supplicans.” My experiences as a teacher taught me that, with some very rare exceptions of children who were emotionally disturbed, mistake after mistake after mistake in both academics and in behavior is to be endured without loss of closeness to the individual. I may have failed in that goal sometimes, but I tried. And Francis and the church teaches us to try as well.

Vincent Gaglione

The declaration’s emphasis that it has not changed traditional church teaching is troublesome to me because I learned that sexual activity outside of marriage is grievously wrong. More significantly, why does the pope or the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith fail to give any similar emphasis to either the sacrament of matrimony (that is, between men and women) or the hallowed joy of conjugal love between a man and a woman? Worst of all, this declaration inspires so much confusion and misinformation about genuine love of our neighbor, especially those who need the good news of the Gospel, which could be avoided if the declaration were edited to change the word “couple” to “people”!

Robert O’Connell

It seems to me that the voice of the Holy Spirit is being ignored in this discussion. Aren’t we all being challenged to imitate Christ, who looked into the eyes of sinners and received them without hesitation or judgment? There was no condition placed on a sinner before meeting them in their brokenness. Jesus healed, welcomed, cleansed, fed and consoled because love is unconditional. Not a single person asked to be forgiven before Christ conveyed his love and mercy. The encounter with each person’s soul was transforming, even though the Gospels don’t document all the inner miracles of grace received.

Sharon Malay

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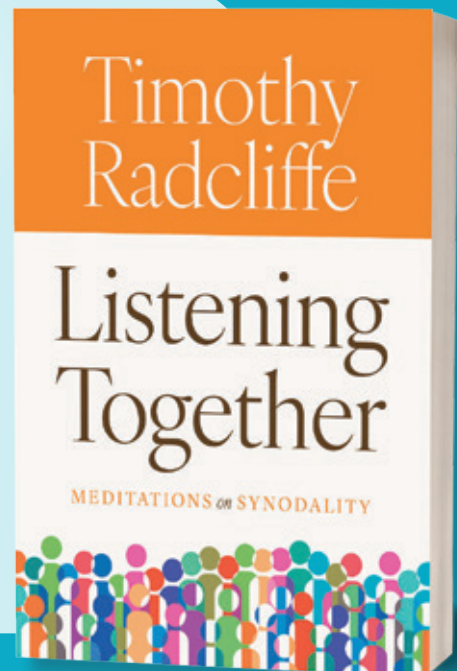
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In Ukraine and Gaza, Just War Means Foreseeing a Just End to the War

Israel has been at war against Hamas in Gaza for almost half a year; Russia attacked Ukraine two years ago. At the beginning of both conflicts, the precipitating cause for war was self-defense—against terrorist violence from Hamas and against Russia’s commitment to topple Ukraine’s pro-Western democratic government. Both Israel and Ukraine were victims of attacks on their own soil, leading them into conflicts that by almost any definition would be called just. But as these wars persist, it becomes increasingly difficult to answer the question of how further violence can be compatible with an ultimate path to peace.

In Gaza, even though there may be glimmers of hope for a pause in the conflict, there is no movement toward a lasting settlement. At press time, Hamas’s leadership was reported to be still deliberating a proposal for an extended cease-fire in exchange for hostage releases. One of the sticking points is that rather than seeking a permanent truce, Israeli leadership has remained committed to continuing its military operation, which has resulted in the deaths of more than 27,000 Gazans out of a population of 2.3 million, 85 percent of whom have been driven from their homes. The Israeli government, led by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, remains steadfast not only in insisting that Hamas cannot remain in power in Gaza, but also in rejecting any future possibility of a Palestinian state. At the same time, the risk of a wider regional conflict grows as the United States retaliates against Iranian-backed militias for a drone attack in nearby Jordan that killed three U.S. service members.

In Ukraine, the war appears to

be growing even more entrenched. Ukraine’s initial success in pushing Russia’s invasion back largely stalled in 2023, with the frontlines remaining stable for most of that time. There are no publicly acknowledged negotiations for an end to hostilities, but Ukraine’s ability to continue resisting Russia is threatened by the uncertainty of U.S. funding, which has been mired in partisan divisions over U.S. border policy. Ukraine’s stated aim remains the expulsion of Russia from both its eastern provinces invaded in 2022 and from Crimea, which Russia illegally annexed in 2014.

“There is no such thing as a just war: They do not exist!” Pope Francis spoke these words in March 2022, lamenting the Russian invasion of Ukraine. And indeed, the savagery of war in the 21st century can bring the most idealistic world leaders and politicians to a certain *realpolitik*, or even defeatism, over the possibility of conducting a military campaign according to the principles of just war theory.

Even wars that begin for the most just reasons imaginable can grind on and become “forever wars.” These endless engagements seem to continue because leaders simply cannot find any way out other than defeat. This is a lesson the United States has been taught, even if it has not fully learned it, in Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan. Rumors that Pope Francis might formally abandon just war theory have not been borne out, but his *cri de coeur* against the injustice of war and his calls for peace have been consistent. While many have critiqued his commitment to peace as naïve in the face of the threats posed by aggressors, Francis has continued to denounce violence in Ukraine and

Gaza.

It is understandable, especially in the aftermath of an assault by an armed aggressor, to focus on self-defense as a just cause for war. However, just war theory, first laid out by St. Augustine in the fourth century, always involves other concerns as well, including conditions on how war is conducted—such as the proportionate use of force and the avoidance of harm to noncombatants. But the overriding concern is that the goal of a just war must always be to restore or establish peace.

A later criterion added to the just war theory, elaborated in the 16th century, sharpens the question of how the violence of war can be aimed ultimately at peace. It asks whether the use of force has a reasonable chance of success. And those asking the question must remember that “success” is not defined solely in terms of tactical and strategic objectives but necessarily includes the just goal of establishing peace.

Judging what constitutes a “reasonable chance,” of course, is subject to extensive disagreement in practice. But such disagreement should not become a license to justify violence until those calling for peace can provide an alternate means to achieve it. War must be a last resort and once joined, wars must have an end, both in the sense of an ultimate goal of peace and in the sense of being able to finally conclude. They cannot be allowed to continue simply because they have begun.

U.S. support for both Ukraine and Israel began in understandable recognition of the justice of their causes. But as these wars continue, the United States has a responsibility to challenge our allies to explain how

they are expected to end. In Europe, that means a realistic assessment of whether Ukraine can regain its full territorial integrity or whether the current frontlines of the war should be understood as an acceptable ceasefire line to be held to deter further Russian aggression until a negotiated peace comes into view.

And in Gaza, it means that the United States cannot ignore the Israeli government's ongoing rejection of a two-state solution, which the international community has supported as the path to peace. That does not mean that Israel has to follow international dictates—but it should mean that Israel has to explain how it intends to establish a just peace that respects the rights and dignity of Palestinians in the territories it occupies or controls. It is the lack of any credible answer to that question, in addition to the disproportionate destruction of civilian life in Gaza, that motivates opposition to Israel's use of force. Crucially, without that answer, Israel's military efforts cannot succeed in making it safe in the long term, but only in returning to the status quo ante of Palestinian resentment of and resistance to Israeli rule.

The point of just war theory is not to make it easier to legitimize wars for a just cause, but to limit the ways the violence of war can be justified. If its hardest questions cannot be answered well, then even those who support a just cause have a duty to reject violence rather than pretending it aims at a peace it can never deliver.

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Putting people first: why Catholics should resist NIMBYism

The cost and supply of housing has gone from a problem associated with a handful of high-growth cities to a national crisis. Anybody who has moved in the last three years understands this. Calls to loosen zoning restrictions and repeal parking space requirements for apartment buildings in the hope of spurring housing production have become mainstream.

Whether we are homeowners or renters, singles or retirees, parents or parents-to-be, the housing crisis affects all of us. But what does it demand of us as Catholics?

Perhaps the most relevant element of the Catholic ethic here is the idea that *people are good*. Pope Francis affirms this in his encyclical “*Laudato Si’*,” in which, contra Malthusian fears about overpopulation, he argues that even concern for the earth cannot be placed above the dignity of the human person. This may seem simple enough. But people do not exist in a vacuum. Recognizing their dignity or accommodating their needs is not just an intellectual exercise. Their needs must be provided for concretely in the real world, and one of those needs is housing.

Does this mean Catholics should never oppose new housing? What about objections to ugly new buildings, or traffic, or rapidly increasing density leading to a sense of overcrowding? Are these illegitimate concerns? I would not argue that, and housing policy is certainly one of those matters on which Catholics may freely argue and disagree.

I would instead frame the issue this way: At least in our country’s higher-growth, most housing-deficient regions, it may be necessary to choose between the needs of people and our preferences for the built environment around us. We might have

an image of what a “family-friendly neighborhood” looks like: detached houses with yards, for example. But a family-friendly neighborhood could instead be a neighborhood that the average family *can afford*, and it may look different than our ideal. It may be the case that putting the human person and the family first requires letting go of certain aesthetic preferences.

It should give NIMBY-ish Catholics pause just how easily we can slip from griping over a jammed parking lot or bland architecture into opining that there are “too many people” or muttering, over yet another new housing development, “cancer is growth, too.” These not-in-my-backyard sentiments are closed off to us Catholics.

There is nothing wrong with preferring continuity in our built surroundings. But if wiping a neighborhood off the map is one extreme, the other extreme is the “historic district,” which declares that urban growth is over. To argue that a new building in an old town contradicts the character of the place would be like arguing that translating the Bible into new languages contradicts Scripture. We can instead understand new growth as the latest note in an ancient song, participation in one long, unfolding moment.

Retaining the general character of existing places that are already well-loved does not need to mean stasis. It is possible to add and grow in continuity with what already exists. The old cities of Europe, or even America’s small towns and old urban cores, may appear, in broad strokes, as they did decades or centuries ago. Yet that continuity of appearance veils a lot of organic change. What you don’t notice is the removed or erected wall to shrink or grow a retail space; the side or rear unit on a house; the floor added or removed from a downtown building;

the permeable border between hotel, boarding house, small apartment building, mansion. Such small-scale incremental change is not sufficient to meet housing needs everywhere; it should not be a goal over and above the people it serves. But it is an example of what is possible in many American communities that have seen hardly any growth except of the horizontal sprawl variety.

But most of all, what Catholics must contribute to the housing debate is that, whichever policies are adopted, housing is a means to an end, that of the person and the family. In *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, the political philosopher Edmund Burke, though an Anglican, described a worldview compatible with the Catholic ethic when he wrote of the state, “As the ends of such a partnership cannot be obtained in many generations, it becomes a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born.”

Urbanism and the YIMBY (Yes, in My Back Yard) take on housing are particular applications of this idea. The neighborhood is the state, in this conception, writ small. It is difficult to communicate to NIMBYs—many of whom simply like the places they now live in—that the quiet stasis they demand is a cost exacted on the future, on individuals and families who are no less real for not being currently physically present. Our cities, towns and neighborhoods, like the Sabbath, are made for man, and it is dignified and wonderful work to carry on the process of making them.

Addison Del Mastro writes about urbanism and cultural history at substack.com/thedeletedscenes.

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Is Ireland's vocation crisis an opportunity for revival?

By Kevin Hargaden

The Irish state broadcaster RTÉ aired two documentaries in January looking at the decline of the Catholic Church in Ireland. “The Last Priests in Ireland” was hosted by the acclaimed comedian—and one of the stars of the iconic 1990s sitcom “Father Ted”—Ardal O’Hanlon, and “The Last Nuns in Ireland” was hosted by the award-winning journalist Dearbhail McDonald.

Both programs eschew the easy path of gloating over the challenges facing the institutional church. Mr. O’Hanlon carefully reflects on his own ambiguous relationship with faith and his need for the liturgies of the church, even as he struggles to believe anything at all. And Ms. McDonald sensitively explores the remarkable achievements of Irish religious sisters without failing to acknowledge the abuse and neglect that often took place under their watch.

In every interaction with priests, Mr. O’Hanlon’s pro-

gram is warm and generous. Ms. McDonald particularly foregrounds the voices of the women religious themselves. Reflecting on the debt she owes the Sisters of St. Clare, who ran the school she attended, she recalls, “They taught us to be critical thinkers, to be independent, and to interrogate and search for the truth wherever I went.” Her program also strikingly depicts the radical nature of contemplative life.

But the numbers tracked in both documentaries are stark. Half a century ago, there were more than 14,000 women religious in Ireland. Today that number stands closer to 4,000, with an average age that is over 80. New vocations are, in Ms. McDonald’s words, “vanishingly rare.”

The national seminary at Maynooth was once home to as many as 500 seminarians. Today there are just 20. Neither Ms. McDonald nor Mr. O’Hanlon conclude that

The Rev. Gerard Quirke raises the chalice at Mass Rock on Ireland's Achill Island on April 4, 2021.

the church in Ireland will actually die out. In fact, both programs give plenty of space for Christian leaders to articulate how they see the state of the contemporary church not so much as suffering a decline but instead as going through a kind of “fulfillment,” experiencing a change in the seasons—a period of hibernation before a new spring for the Catholic Church in Ireland emerges at the right time.

So where can you find signs of that new life in churches around Ireland today? Niall Leahy, S.J., is the parish priest of St. Francis Xavier Church in Dublin. The parish is in an economically and socially deprived neighborhood of Dublin's north inner city.

Given their gloomy nature, Father Leahy says he was surprised at how much he enjoyed the documentaries, finding himself in agreement with the basic theme that the decline of the church in Ireland is terminal, in a sense. “Cultural Catholicism will die out,” he says, but he believes he already senses what might replace it on the horizon.

The new role of the priesthood in Ireland, according to Father Leahy, “will be forming missionary disciples.” According to this vision, the parish priest shifts from acting as a service provider, someone who struggles to single-handedly meet the spiritual and pastoral needs of his community, to the role of pastoral catalyst, someone who empowers Christians “to be ministers themselves.”

He already sees elements of this evolution becoming a practical part of parish life “in our Sunday evening young adult Mass, which is not just for young people, but by young people.” According to Father Leahy, there has been steady growth in participation since this ministry was launched. And more important than any numbers, what encourages Father Leahy is a sense that these young Catholics have agency in the life of their parish.

According to Father Leahy, when it seemed at its most powerful, “the church was over-sacramentalized.”

“The importance of receiving the Eucharist and showing up at public devotions was over-emphasized at the expense of other elements of the Christian life,” he explains. The inner life of faith could be left entirely uncultivated.

Now it may seem as if the Irish church is much weaker. But those who are still involved are exceptionally active, Father Leahy says. The passivity of the old Irish Catho-

cism is gone.

This is borne out in the experience of a new generation of Catholics coming into their own in today's Ireland. Annie, who, like the other young people **America** spoke with, asked that her full name not be used to protect her privacy, is a young professional from rural Ireland who describes herself as a “practicing Catholic.” She does not assert that as a countercultural statement. It is just part of who she has become.

She was raised in a Mass-going family, and in adulthood she has embraced her faith as something of her own and something she treasures. She expresses it not only through sacramental observance but also through soup runs for Dublin's homeless people and her participation in Bible study and spiritual book clubs. She is part of an intentional Christian community. She helps with the children's ministry in her parish and leads the young adult ministry. She sees faith as something that demands response in daily action that is woven seamlessly into her life.

As she sees it, Irish culture may be outwardly rejecting institutional religion—with legitimate cause, considering the revelations of its many abuse scandals—but the Irish people still see the core of the Gospel as a good thing.

Many friends would very strongly say they are not religious, she explains, but “they would say they do believe in Jesus.” It is perhaps true that ordinary people who statistically are drifting from the church are not actually that far away—a sort of inverse of the “over-sacramentalized” dynamic that had typified the Irish church.

Annie believes that the many good works sponsored by the church might change its diminished standing in today's Ireland. She would love to see the church think more seriously about connecting its grassroots initiatives so that people can more easily find the good things that are happening all over the country: a web of different young adult ministries, a remarkable array of charitable organizations, and arguably Irish society's most far-reaching environmental activism. If she could get the ear of the bishops, she “would advise them to work really hard on promoting and linking up what they are already doing.”

There can be a gap between “what the church is, compared to what we think the church is,” Annie says.

Chris is a teacher outside of Dublin. When he considers the decline in numbers of people committing to religious life, he senses that “it's not the ending of something; it's more transitioning to a new era.”

He sees Pope Francis' commitment to the synodal way as central to this emerging new church, a return to a more communal understanding of the faith. He knows there are

OSV News photo/Seán Molloy, courtesy Irish Catholic



Catholic identity in Ireland in a rapid fall

69% of residents in the Republic of Ireland described themselves as Catholics in the 2022 census—down from **79%** who did so in 2016, **84%** in 2011, and over **90%** in the census taken in 2006.

3,515,861: The number of Irish residents in 2022 who described themselves as Catholic, down **180,783** from the previous census in 2016.

14% of Irish residents ticked the “no religion” box on the latest census form, up from **9.8%** in 2011. There were also large increases in the number of Orthodox Christians (up **65%** to 100,165), Muslims (up **32%** to 81,930), and Hindus (up **141%** to 33,043).

736,210: The number of people describing themselves as having “no religion” in the Republic of Ireland, up by **284,269** since 2016.

2,116: The total number of priests in Ireland (as of November 2022). **Fifteen percent** (299 priests) are over 75 and still working; **25%** (547 priests) are between 60 and 75; and **22%** (464 priests) are between 40 and 60. Just **52–2.5%**—are under 40.

27%: Weekly Mass attendance in 2020. While still among the highest rates in Europe, it is down from **91%** in 1975.

8%: The population increase of the Republic of Ireland between 2016 and 2022. The population growth was largely the result of immigration. Ireland’s overall population was above **5 million people** in 2022 for the first time since the Great Famine in the mid-19th century, when over a million people died of starvation and another million emigrated.

Sources: Irish Census Bureau, Association of Irish Priests; Iona Institute

some young adults in the Irish church who are skeptical about this project. But he can see no way forward that is not in some sense a turn back to the vision of the early Christian community found in the New Testament. He thinks forming people to better understand their faith will be the key demand in the years ahead.

Chris worries that the very serious religious commitment of some young Catholics means that there is a risk that individual communities and ministries will turn inward, rejecting full catholicity to become more like an intense sect. He explains that in their zeal, some lay communities can almost become a church within the church, in part because there is a tendency to cultivate a victim mentality based on hostility they discern in Irish media or the wider culture.

They end up taking an “us and them” stance to the broader society and sometimes even to their fellow Catholics. “They’re almost a little bit judgy,” said Chris. But the Christian life is “not about getting into that holy huddle,” he says.

He appreciated a scene in Mr. O’Hanlon’s documentary during which one young priest cited Pope Francis’ famous call that “the church must be a field hospital.”

Both Annie and Chris see challenges facing the church, but neither believes that addressing the decline in religious vocations should be prioritized. They sense that God may indeed be pushing the church to “face outwards and be pastoral and reach towards people who are not in the huddle.”

Longstanding disputes about the church’s positions on sexuality are also of particular concern. On a personal level, Annie and Chris say they have witnessed sensitive, nuanced, pastorally careful responses to Catholics who are not heterosexual. But the church’s positions “on paper” are so stark, they say, that L.G.B.T.Q. people often do not even come close enough to the church to experience the welcome they might find.

Father Leahy sees the future of the church among the laity, a people striving to be missionary disciples. The stories that Annie and Chris tell are evidence that this is already beginning.

Kevin Hargaden contributes from Dublin.

Was Bolsonaro's treatment of Brazil's Yanomami people a genocide?

It has been a year since Brazilians woke to news of famine and the deaths of hundreds of Indigenous children because of malnutrition and preventable diseases in Yanomami territory. Now, Brazil's most celebrated Indigenous community is slowly recovering from what some have characterized as an attempted genocide.

Over the four-year administration of President Jair Bolsonaro, between 2019 and 2023, 570 Yanomami children perished as 20,000 wildcat miners, known in Brazil as garimpeiros, tore up the forest in what should have been protected Yanomami territory, seeking gold and minerals used in contemporary high-tech products.

The Yanomami live in a vast territory about the size of Portugal on Brazil's border with Venezuela. Out of a population of approximately 30,000 people, those 570 deaths represent nearly 2 percent of the Yanomami population.

"In relation to the Yanomami, I have no doubt at all [it was genocide]," Evaristo Spengler, O.F.M., the bishop of Roraima, told **America**. "The previous [Bolsonaro] government denied safe drinking water and medication when there were reports that the Indigenous were dying," he said. "The project of, in fact, exterminating the Yanomami was so that the territory would be available for the garimpeiros and other natural resource projects. There is no other name for this than genocide."

The expansion of the prospectors' reach into Indigenous territories was broadly encouraged by the Bolsonaro government, to devastating effect. The garimpeiros poured mercury into rivers, raided and occupied government health stations intended for the Yanomami, used Yanomami girls as cooks and sex slaves, and intimidated entire Yanomami communities.

Brazil's historical relationship with garimpeiros is complex. In much of Brazil, they are celebrated as tough, adventurous, entrepreneurial men of the frontier. In downtown Boa Vista, the capital of Brazil's state of Roraima near the border with Venezuela, an enormous statue of a garimpeiro panning for gold dominates the square facing the state legislature. At the same time, many of today's garimpeiros are financed by drug gangs, who launder narco-profits through Brazil's loosely regulated gold markets.

The plight of the Indigenous communities has drawn greater attention since Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva became president. He visited Boa Vista during his first week back in office in January 2023. Mr. Lula had previously served two terms as president between 2003 and 2011.

But that visit hardly means the threat to the Indige-



A statue of a garimpeiro panning for gold dominates a town square in Boa Vista.

nous community has been resolved, said Bishop Spengler. The Brazilian Ministry of Health has recorded 308 deaths in Yanomami territory in the first 11 months of 2023; 343 deaths were recorded in 2022.

The Lula government is spending \$242 million to address the emergency this year, but the results so far have fallen short of expectations. Bishop Spengler remains concerned that "Brazilians have shown that they don't have the capacity to manage this situation."

Mr. Lula's efforts to get the garimpeiros out of Yanomami Territory over the last year have not entirely succeeded, despite a number of raids by IBAMA, the Brazilian Institute of Environment and Renewable Natural Resources, with support from the Brazilian military. But IBAMA claims to have reduced illegal mining activity by 85 percent.

During the Bolsonaro years, many nurses and other health clinic workers left the region after threats from gun-toting garimpeiros. Now, under Mr. Lula, many have returned, and clinics that serve the Indigenous community are working at twice their official capacity, dealing with illnesses and malnutrition that had previously been unaddressed.

Bishop Spengler is certain about which side the church is on in this continuing struggle.

"If a church wasn't against death, wasn't against genocide, it wouldn't be evangelical," he said. He thinks the moves initiated by the Lula administration—its declaration of a health emergency for the Yanomami—begin to move Brazil back from the brink of genocide, but he was careful to emphasize that a serious threat to the Yanomami people remains "in health, food and all the life conditions they are facing."

Canadian journalists Michael Swan and Yone Simidzu reported from Boa Vista, Brazil. Their visit to the Yanomami region was sponsored by Development and Peace-Caritas Canada.



In Arizona, pro-life Latinas vow to fight abortion expansion initiative

Over the last two years, voters in seven states have had a choice to make: keep existing access or implement new restrictions on abortion. In each case, they chose to preserve access to abortion.

Voters in Arizona will likely be facing the same choice this November with support growing for a ballot measure that will enact a state constitutional right to abortion until fetal viability. Today, with some exceptions, abortion is illegal in Arizona after 15 weeks of pregnancy.

Given that they constitute a third of the state's residents, Latinas will no doubt be a factor in the vote. And if the state's pro-life Latinas have anything to say about it, Arizona will reject a new right to abortion.

"We have a grave situation in Arizona. We need the Latino community to wake up and to stand up against this," Mayra Rodriguez Villeda, who says she used to work for Planned Parenthood, told *America*. "There are a lot of people in the pro-life movement who see things very positively, but if you ask me—and I've been involved in the [abortion] industry—things are not going well at all. They're tricking people."

Language matters, she said. Abortion advocates will use euphemistic terms like "reproductive freedom" to describe access to abortion throughout a nine-month pregnancy. "Oftentimes our people are not familiar with the language," said Ms. Rodriguez Villeda, the state director of Moms for Arizona.

"Part of the problem is that religious leaders in our Hispanic communities don't want to talk about it," she said. "Well, if they don't want to talk about it, then they should let us come in and talk to the community. We shouldn't be afraid to talk about abortion at the kitchen table or with our neighbors or with our friends at lunch."

As a group, Latinos have become seemingly more supportive of abortion over the last several years. In 2019, a study by the Public Religion Research Institute found that most religiously affiliated Latinos are pro-life, including 58 percent of Latino Protestants and 52 percent of Latino Catholics.

But in 2022, in a P.R.R.I. survey taken in the days following the Supreme Court's overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, a different finding emerged. More than 75 percent of Catholic Latinos said abortion should be legal in "most or all cases." A different survey later in the same year from Pew Research suggests that the spike in support for abortion rights may not be waning. It found that 58 percent of Latino Catholics believe that abortion should be legal in most or all cases.

"People have a conscience, but they need more information," said Rosie Villegas-Smith, founder of *Voces Por La Vida*, a binational pro-life group that educates the community about abortion in the United States and Mexico. "They are not ideologues. They are open to changing their stance in favor of life."

Protesters pray the rosary outside a Planned Parenthood facility in San Jose, Calif., on Sept. 28, 2022.

Ms. Villegas-Smith believes most U.S. voters are in favor of some level of abortion restriction. They end up supporting certain initiatives, she said, because they are misinformed. Voces Por La Vida forms pro-life leaders, including young people and parents. She believes that, as a whole, Latinos are pro-life.

“The ballot initiative goes far beyond Roe v. Wade,” according to Jake Warner, senior counsel for Alliance Defending Freedom, a conservative legal advocacy group. He argues that broad exceptions to post-viability restrictions on abortions “would allow for dangerous abortions and inhuman abortion through all nine months of pregnancy. And if you look at the polls, when voters truly understand the impact of laws like this, they don’t want them.”

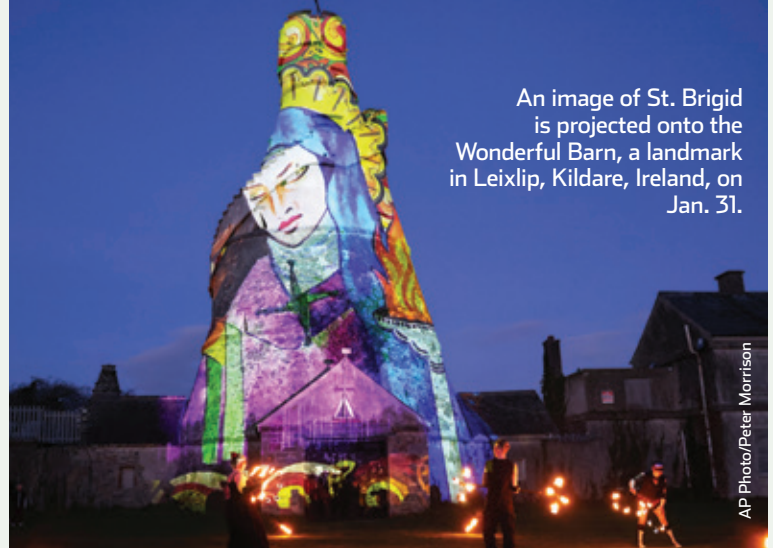
Ron Johnson, the executive director of the Arizona Catholic Conference, made similar observations.

“We could be going from a very pro-life situation to the other end of the spectrum, which is troublesome,” he said. “Most people don’t want to go that extreme, but I think that’s why the wording is the way it is. Because [abortion rights advocates] know that, too.”

At the same time, Mr. Johnson stressed that abortion is not the only issue of interest for the church. He noted advocacy to end the death penalty and support for adoptions and foster care, as well as Walking With Moms In Need, a parish-based initiative for pregnant and parenting mothers in tough situations.

“The role of the church is tremendously important in upholding the life and dignity of all people,” he said. “We are concerned with all human life. It begins at conception, but it doesn’t end there.”

J.D. Long García, *senior editor.*



An image of St. Brigid is projected onto the Wonderful Barn, a landmark in Leixlip, Kildare, Ireland, on Jan. 31.

AP Photo/Peter Morrison

GOODNEWS: St. Brigid relic returns to her parish church in Kildare

A relic of St. Brigid was returned to her hometown on Jan. 28, more than a millennium after it was first taken. According to tradition, Brigid, born around the year 450 in Dundalk, County Louth, Ireland, was buried at her monastery in Kildare.

Around 300 years later, when the Vikings were raiding Ireland, her remains were moved to Downpatrick in present-day Northern Ireland and buried alongside Ireland’s other two patron saints, St. Patrick and St. Colmcille. St. Brigid’s remains were moved again in the 16th century and taken to Portugal to be preserved from King Henry VIII’s forces.

A fragment of Brigid’s remains was returned to Ireland in the 1930s for private devotion. Now, to mark 1,500 years since her death, that fragment has been enclosed in a special reliquary and moved to St. Brigid’s parish church.

Hundreds of people gathered in Kildare for Mass to mark the occasion. Bishop Denis Nulty of Kildare and Leighlin called the celebration of St. Brigid’s Day on Feb. 1 a moment to reflect on the saint’s message of hospitality.

Bishop Nulty said he hoped the relic would inspire the faithful to follow Brigid’s example. “It’s too simple to install a relic and leave it at that. She would call us to do much more!” the bishop said. “What were the character traits that defined St. Brigid of Kildare? To mention just a few, she was hospitable, she was a peacemaker, she was a strong woman of faith.”

Noting recent anti-immigrant protests at asylum centers, Bishop Nulty lamented the fact that Ireland has a tradition of welcoming people, but “not always if you are fleeing persecution, war or trauma.”

“The scenes on some of our streets and the misinformation that passes unverified on social media disturb because this is not the hospitality that Brigid espoused.”

Michael Kelly writes for OSV News from Dublin.



Martin Scorsese's Struggle for Faith

The director discusses 'Killers of the Flower Moon,' the American dream and his new film about Jesus

By Ryan Di Corpo

Jolted awake by his burning conscience, Charlie Cappa, a young, square-jawed Italian-American in a white tank top, wipes his forehead, crosses his darkened bedroom (a crucifix hanging on its back wall) and examines his face in the mirror. It is 3 or 4 a.m., but the time does not matter. Cappa, played by Harvey Keitel, is up and his sin is ever before him, to quote the psalm. In Martin Scorsese's "Mean Streets," he spends his time hanging around a bar, acting as a small-time mafioso, covering for his good-for-nothing friend and contemplating "the

pain in hell" he may endure if he does not turn his life around.

"You don't make up for your sins in the church. You do it in the streets," Scorsese says in a voiceover in the opening seconds of this breakthrough film, a rollicking, in-your-face, shock-to-the-system shot with such immediacy and tinged with such guilt that it feels more alive than you have ever been. (And never one to absolve himself, the then-31-year-old director, in a brief cameo, kisses a gun and fires it out a car window during the deadly climax of the film.)



Courtesy of Apple TV+

Lily Gladstone and Martin Scorsese on the set of “Killers of the Flower Moon”

The introduction of a confident, cinematic live wire who, over the next several decades, would become the most influential director in American film, “Mean Streets” is an essential text establishing the core themes—greed, guilt and what God’s got to do with it—that would distinguish Scorsese’s filmography over the next half-century.

There is a direct line from Scorsese’s early work to his latest feature, “Killers of the Flower Moon,” in which the sins of this country’s past and the crimes of a murderous gang out for the Osage people’s wealth tell a sickening, yet distinctly American story about who we are and

how we got here. In a wide-ranging interview about the film and its influences, the Oscar-winning director spoke with **AMERICA** about the myth of objectivity in cinema, the history of the American western, the distinction between justice and mercy, and—as he sees it—the impossibility of learning from history. This interview has been edited for style, clarity and length.

Ryan Di Corpo: For over 50 years—through “Mean Streets,” “Taxi Driver,” “Gangs of New York,” “The Aviator,” “The Irishman” and now “Killers of the

Martin Scorsese has a private audience with Pope Francis at the Vatican on Jan. 31, 2024.



CNS photo/Vatican Media

Flower Moon—you have demonstrated a persistent interest in American myths and the stories we tell ourselves about ourselves. After all this probing, are you any closer to understanding America? Or are you ultimately left with more questions than answers?


Martin Scorsese: I think I understand something more [about America], and I think that has a lot to do with what Europe was and still is to a certain extent. The constant wars, the constant oppression, the constant difficulties, using religion as an excuse—all of this going on until finally people said, “There’s a whole new continent. Let’s get outta here. Let’s get to this new continent. It’s wide open, we can do anything and there’s freedom. We can have freedom.” And ultimately with the quote, “revolution,” unquote, we had that freedom, with no official religion or church overseeing how we’re to live in our government system.

This seemed like a paradise. And you have all this open land and suddenly it becomes Manifest Destiny.

[You had people arguing:] “Oh, there are people on the land, but you can work deals with them. If you can’t work deals with them, it’s gonna be a problem. No, then, you’ll have to kill them. But we’re meant to be here. God has given us this land.”

But I think the bottom line [in America] has always been the economic drive to make money. That’s the culture, I think. It seems throughout history, they talk about the advances and the transcontinental railroad and all that, but behind all that is to make more money—at anybody’s expense. That’s the key thing. What is success here? Success is making money, and if you can’t make money, at least it’s winning at any cost. That is the American dream. The value of the culture is distorted, then. I think that’s what I’ve learned over the years reading more about history and reading more about European history, Asian history.

This is what kept me going through the shoot [of “Killers of the Flower Moon”], learning more and more about this. [The antagonists] just care about how much money



‘When a society is not based on a moral foundation or spiritual foundation, then the corruption sets in easily.’

they’re gonna make. Why not? Who’s gonna stop them? There’s nobody really to stop them.

In a way, [American] society is not based on morality. When a society is not based on a moral foundation or spiritual foundation, then the corruption sets in easily and makes you think you’re doing the right thing. Because that’s how everybody else thinks.

You talk about America not being based on a spiritual foundation. And in a recent interview with GQ, you discussed your Catholic faith. You’ve walked away from it, come back to it, investigated it, perhaps fought with it. But I think you would say it’s a part of you, a part of your earliest sense of identity. You said to GQ: “I have to find out who the hell I am.” So, Mr. Scorsese, who are you? And what does your Catholic faith have to say about it?

[A long pause.] My Catholic faith is about my Catholic faith—meaning the struggle for faith, dealing with acquiring faith, of living with faith even through periods of doubt. And this is a struggle from which everything else emanates, I think. And maybe you’ll never know who the hell you are, but maybe you’ll find out bits and pieces of yourself along the way. But it has to do with believing in faith, really.

I work closely with our mutual friend, Father James Martin, on L.G.B.T.Q. ministry. Why did you agree to executive produce “Building a Bridge” [a documentary about Father Martin’s ministry] a few years ago? Did you have any connection to Father Martin’s work?

Yes, I’d read some of his books. Some members of my family are part of the L.G.B.T.Q. community. We worked on “Silence” together. That’s when I first met [Father Martin]. But I just knew the difficulties, the brutality of life around L.G.B.T.Q. people back in the early ’50s, growing up. A couple members of my family were gay, and I saw what they

went through and what they still go through.

I knew them as good people. How do you explain it? You just know them as a person. What their preferences are, how they’re made, what their DNA is—I don’t know. It’s who they are. I came from a world where the way you “change” an L.G.B.T.Q. person is you beat them up. Growing up, I felt for them, particularly during the AIDS crisis.

Last May, you met with Pope Francis at the Vatican and announced that you were “imagining and writing a screenplay for a film about Jesus.” Can you tell us anything about this project? Why make another film about Jesus in addition to “The Last Temptation of Christ”?

I’m thinking in response to what Pope Francis wrote about and the idea of making Jesus accessible, not putting Jesus on a wall or in a painting or in a stained-glass window. Jesus immediate, with us now, right in the room as we speak. And dealing with the accessibility of who Jesus is and continues to be in our lives. Hence, I’m thinking of a film that might be partially modern day, partially ancient, I’m not quite sure. We’ve come up with a script, myself and [longtime collaborator] Kent Jones. I hope to be shooting some of it in April to get it going.

But it wouldn’t be a usual, straight narrative of the life of Jesus in any way. It would be something that makes us think of Jesus in the present. And in a different way, too. Some of it would be based on what Shūsaku Endō wrote in his book *A Life of Jesus*. I thought it was really interesting how he comes about it from an Asian point of view to make us see Jesus in another way, and how it pertains to our lives now. And how it’ll always be something at the crux of our lives.

Let’s get back to “Killers of the Flower Moon.” You’ve spoken extensively about your personal connection to Italian neorealist cinema, the postwar artistic revolution that the French film critic and theorist André Bazin called “an aesthetic of reality.” In “Killers,” there is both a brute realism and a contrasting artifice—especially at the end. How did you view this dichotomy between realism and artifice, truth and lies, in the film? Is there a neorealist aesthetic at play here?

I wonder what “neorealist aesthetic” really means at this point. I think there’s a confusion when one talks about neorealism, associating black-and-white, grainy images with reality. Black-and-white, grainy images, at the time, were made because that’s all the technology allowed. So people often think, “Well, it looks realistic because it looks like a newsreel.” Well, 70 years ago that’s all there was. But



‘With every generation, there’s an obligation to guide and to teach.’

if the newsreels were able to have been shot in color, they would have been. In fact, John Ford shot some in color, and George Stevens, of course.

I think the sense of black-and-white as reality is more artificial than color. And so, for me, the implication of the words “realist aesthetic” is that they could be perceived, in the wrong way, as a lack of imagination—shooting just what’s there. But just what’s there is something that you have to compose and you have to create. You have to block it with people: the body language involved, the elements of movement inside the frame. So that, in a way, what I was trying for may be misinterpreted as something that’s realistic, but in reality, it was a kind of observation.

But when you observe, you have to place the camera in a certain place, which means you make an aesthetic decision. That is not realist. You have to make certain choices. So that, ultimately, what appears to be objective, maybe, as opposed to subjective—to have the landscape work for you, to have actors’ bodies work for you, to have the props work for you, to have the sky work for you, that’s all a decision. And maybe if those images give the impression of being “realistic,” I would prefer they be thought of as objective because, ultimately, what we tried for was an accumulation, an accumulated effect of *what appear to be* simply “realist images.” The accumulation of those scenes as they build and build and build until the picture gets tighter and tighter like a grip on the audience. The way it gets tighter and tighter like a grip on the characters. And that is done through artifice. It looks objective, but there’s no such thing. There’s no such thing.

It was a matter of pulling back and not intruding with the camera or not intruding with the composition. There’s such a thing in film editing called non-editing. It’s when you don’t make a cut. And so, ultimately, with the length of the picture, I was able to fall into a pattern or a design, I should say, where there are these scenes that were done in an objective way, as much as possible—which took in the landscape, which took in the interiors of their houses, the

furniture, the plates on the table. All of these things become stylistically powerful by the accumulation of their detail by the last hour of the picture.

So in terms of subjectivity, you are always making choices. In reference to some of the major voices of neo-realism—Visconti, Rossellini, De Sica—you’ve written, “They didn’t look away from harshness and violence—quite the contrary. Rather, they dealt with them directly.” In making “Killers,” did you feel perhaps an artistic or even a moral responsibility to deal with the violence in the most direct terms, whether that was objective or subjective?

I think you’re right. The word “honesty” comes to mind, visually, and where we stand in relationship to the action in the frame. How can I just present this? The violence is so strong. There was no need, necessarily, to try to embellish it in any way. When we talk about [the neorealist directors] not looking away, well, I tried to not look away either. Does that mean it’s neorealist? I don’t know, quite honestly. But there’s no doubt that that influence has stuck with me, particularly from “Raging Bull,” but not necessarily “Casino,” into “The Irishman.” And, of course, this film, “Killers.” There were direct lines—particularly from Rossellini’s films—into “Raging Bull.”

In a recent press conference, you said all Americans bear some guilt for the Osage murders, and more broadly, the genocide of Native Americans. And you said, “Yes, I’m part of the system. Yes, I’m European American. And yes, I’m culpable.” It’s the word “culpable” that struck me as a Catholic. Is this film about your own sense of guilt? Was making it a kind of penance?

I don’t know. It’s an interesting question. I kind of discovered it as I was going along—my own culpability. I knew it was there, because I grew up thinking the world was as it existed around me. I didn’t know the history. As I grew older and had some experiences, particularly making films and going around the world, I began to see things differently. And a lot of the suffering that takes place is based upon our systems that we brought in from Europe to America, and the suffering still continues. And therefore, I am culpable.

Historically, many American westerns have depicted Native Americans as a kind of uncivilized enemy, an existential threat to the white settlers. Even in classics. In “Stagecoach,” the Apaches are the murderous enemy; in “The Searchers,” it’s the Comanches, and so on. But there were also films—the shockingly bloody Vietnam

Martin Scorsese speaks with the journalist Paul Elie in front of an audience at the Catholic Media Conference in Quebec City on June 21, 2017, following a screening of his movie "Silence."



CNS photo/Chaz Muth

allegory "Soldier Blue" comes to mind—that portray Native Americans simply as victims of settler violence. In what ways does "Killers" both reference and subvert these classic American westerns? Or do you see it in those terms?

I don't know if ["Killers"] references them at all. I grew up on the western; it was one of my favorite genres. It's true, when I delve further into the history, many of the silent films starred Native American actors or Native Americans. And they were the heroes, in many cases. But between World War I and World War II, the mythology was created of the individualist in the West, the mythology of the good guy who comes in and "civilizes" a land according to his or her background. And in which case you have to have the "villain," who are the people saying, "You're taking our land."

It fed into a mythology which became the western genre, with some of the best westerns made in the '40s and '50s. And as young people, that's what we thought [the American West] was, completely. It's not to play down the violence on both sides, but one has to go to the core root of the problem and understand the violence on both sides. And the films reflected that. The films from the '40s and '50s particularly reflected the European-American point of view.

There was an attempt in the early '50s in Hollywood to make a series of films that were pro-Native. They were made at MGM, at Warner Brothers, at Fox. The key ones were made by Delmer Daves, an excellent director, particu-

larly "Broken Arrow"—with Jimmy Stewart and Debra Paget and Jeff Chandler—which was the first one I saw in Technicolor. It had Native American rituals. For the first time, I saw [the Native Americans] not as marauding killers. There was this whole other thing [the studios] were trying to do. "Devil's Doorway," a black-and-white film made by the great Anthony Mann, another great director like Delmer Daves; "The Last Wagon," by Delmer Daves; "Apache," with Burt Lancaster, [directed] by Robert Aldrich. And there were a number of films where the Native was portrayed as heroic, not the "noble savage" à la Rousseau, but a real human being.

You get even a sense of this—although they didn't plan on this, I think—in John Ford's "Fort Apache." There's a meeting between Colonel Thursday and Cochise right before the battle starts. And Pedro Armendáriz is the soldier who has to do the translation. And Colonel Thursday, played by Henry Fonda, is so offensive. Watch the intercutting of those three faces in that scene. All of your sympathy and empathy goes to Cochise. That's an extraordinary scene.

However, the real impact of these films was to change the image of the Native American. The big problem was that they were all played by white actors: Robert Taylor, Jeff Chandler, Burt Lancaster, Charles Bronson. "Drum Beat" was another one by Delmer Daves, where they really tried to deal with the problems of what we had done with the Native Americans. So, for me, I had those films in mind, too, as we were making "Killers."



CNS photo/Jon Nelson, courtesy Provenance Productions

Martin Scorsese is seen in the Basilica of St. Patrick's Old Cathedral, in New York City, in this undated photo.

I also found that a film like “Soldier Blue,” as well made as it is, and other films of that period seemed to be atrocity films. At the end of “Killers,” it’s what William Hale says in jail. He says, “Oh, there’ll be an outcry for a little while. Then people will forget.” We’ll have an outcry about the massacre in “Soldier Blue.” We’ll have an outcry about the massacre at Wounded Knee, et cetera, et cetera. There’ll be some trouble here and there, but people will forget. And then we’ll just move on.

I think films like [“Soldier Blue”] that tried to do that sort of thing, as well-meaning as they were, were consumed by people who already agreed and maybe felt good about themselves watching it. Because they put in the time and said, “Yes, it’s terrible, what we did. Isn’t that awful?” And they could move on with their lives. There’s no fundamental change. So the idea is to present the Native Americans as human beings, as people, with pros and cons, with weaknesses and strengths.

I mean, Mollie [Kyle] and Ernest [Burkhart]—they love each other. They love each other. She stayed with him until the end, until after the trial.

The complexity of the relationship between Mollie and Ernest is what fascinated me, ultimately, in making the film. The bad guys are the bad guys. And, by the way, the bad guys—played by [Robert] De Niro and a bunch of

others—are [characters] who keep saying, “Oh, we love the Osage.” And they do. But [those characters are also saying about the Osage people] their time is over, and also they don’t know the value of money. Again, European thinking. I thought to explore how people could all live together and be best friends and still kill each other.

The German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel famously said that we can learn nothing from history. And at the end of the film, as you’ve referenced, when the Osage people’s trauma is reduced to a half-hour radio play, it’s a real narrative slap in the face. And it sure feels like we as a country haven’t learned anything. Is that your point about history?

[A pause.] Well, I’ve lived to be 81 now and I can tell you I don’t think we have. With every generation, there’s an obligation to guide and to teach. Until you’re suffering yourself—like with climate change—until you’re experiencing it yourself, then there might be a change. Because it happened in the past, is it accessible? Is it accessible to a person who’s 10 years old or 15 or 20 right now? I don’t know if it is. It’s the past. This is something I think we have to understand and not expect people to learn from history. I don’t see how you can.



‘The entryway for me in ‘Killers’ was the play of evil and how it asserts itself and how it becomes normal.’

With the politics of the world—a tendency towards democracy as opposed to authoritarianism, slipping back and forth in time—things go in cycles. Read the last 60 pages of *War and Peace*. I like what Tolstoy says about time and history there.

I recently read a comment you made about the film “Salvatore Giuliano,” directed by Francesco Rosi, as being “made from the inside.” Now, in Rosi’s case, the setting is World War II-era Sicily. In “Killers,” it’s the Osage lands in early 20th-century Oklahoma. How did you make (or could you make) the film “from the inside” when its history and culture are foreign to your own personal experiences? Who or what helped?

It’s a very good question because I was thinking about it this morning and I realized, of course, I could make it from the inside, but not as an Osage. I’m not Osage. I’m not Native. Can I make it from the inside as a human being? Yes. Can we make it from the inside as an exploration about [how] corruption creates evil? Yes. It happens to be the white European in this case. And that’s where our entry into the story was. All I could do with the Osage Native American, and the Indigenous people in general, was to try to be as authentic and as respectful as possible to them and their culture, to their suffering and who they are. But the story is really about the evil that comes from the other side of the picture, played by [Leonardo] DiCaprio and De Niro and all the others. It’s really more about that. It’s about how they’re affected by it.

We’re working on another [film] now called “A Pipe for February,” written by Charles Red Corn, which deals with the same period but totally from the Osage point of view. It’s [adapted from] a terrific book. But really the entryway for me [in “Killers”] was the play of evil and how it

asserts itself and how it becomes normal. The complicity, this was the key.

Is there any real way for us to avoid complicity, considering that there’s always going to be a situation like you’ve described where there’s an injustice taking place and we might justify it or feel comfortable in our privilege? Can we really escape complicity?

Let me put it this way: It seems that we should be capable of trying to right the wrong, as best we can, and be part of the right side of it. But on the other hand, to know that we may fail from time to time. [That] doesn’t mean we should stop. It means we should go back in and try again, really. But it’s to become aware of the injustice around us. Justice is one thing and mercy is another. These days we always talk about justice and mercy. I talk about mercy and justice.

What’s the difference for you?

If someone is in a situation where he or she has to be judged, they have to deal with justice. But at the same time, there should be mercy in that judge’s mind. I have family members who have gone to jail, so I know. And people say, “Oh, they’re no good,” but it’s still my nephew, it’s this, it’s that. And this person may have some problems to deal with. One has to understand a little bit more about who the people are rather than just lockin’ ’em up. I’m not talking about serial killers. I’m talking about the average poor guy who doesn’t know what else to do. We say, “Well, they should be part of society,” but maybe they need a different kind of help.

This is where a lot of the Catholic charities come in that people don’t hear about and are extraordinary. But I do think mercy is very important. The offender has to deal with what they’ve done. They have to make some sort of reparation, in a way, to society. But I do think mercy is key.

Ryan Di Corpo is the managing editor of *Outreach* and a former *Joseph A. O’Hare, S.J., fellow at America*.

Priest's Success in Haiti Proves Faith-Filled Action Can Bless Thousands of Lives



The new homes being built for needy Haitian families are seen as an answer to prayer.

When Father Glenn Meaux established the Kobonal Haiti Mission in 1989, families living in that region were trapped in material and spiritual poverty. Seeing their extreme needs, he felt called by God to make a difference in their deeply impoverished villages and developed a plan to provide help. His first outreaches were small, but they quickly expanded as others joined his cause and offered their support.

The impact of his faithfulness to God's calling has been inspiring to see. Through his obedience to the Lord and unwavering commitment to follow the Holy Spirit, thousands have been blessed beyond anyone's expectations.

"An incredible transformation has taken place in Kobonal, Haiti, and it all began with a bold decision to respond to God's calling and to serve as the Lord's instrument of mercy," confirmed Michele Sagarino, president of Cross Catholic Outreach, one of the largest and most effective Catholic relief and development ministries working in the region. "That's really how every effective ministry begins. Someone encounters a situation that breaks their heart or challenges

them spiritually, and then God tells them, 'I want you to be a part of the solution!' At times like those, we need to step out in faith



Fr. Meaux celebrates Mass with students at the Kobonal Haiti Mission.

and let God work through us. Those are acts of obedience and merciful service that both glorify God and bless lives."

Sagarino knows Fr. Meaux well because the ministry she leads has been championing his efforts for more than two decades. During that time many U.S. Catholics have also become aware of the Kobonal Haiti Mission and have joined the cause too.

"While I celebrate the many wonderful things that have been accomplished at the Haiti Kobonal Mission, I'm currently focused on helping the children and families there that still have extreme needs," Sagarino said. "For example, I know there are children in the region who are still illiterate and desperately want to go to school. I want to be sure they get that opportunity. Then there are the families who will be going to sleep tonight in a ramshackle, unsanitary dwelling. I want them to have a safe place to live. Fr. Meaux has created a powerful ministry to support Haiti's poorest families, but the individuals he is trying to reach can't be supplied with what they need unless we step forward to fund those works of mercy. That's how we can make a difference and bless lives."

According to Sagarino, Cross Catholic Outreach's current and specific goal is to help Fr. Meaux's team provide another group of needy families with new homes. (See related story on the opposite page.)

"His house building ministry has become very popular with U.S. Catholics because it provides struggling families with simple but sturdy homes — a foundation for building a better life. People want their charitable donations to produce major benefits and have an impact that will last. My hope is that as people learn more about what Fr. Meaux is accomplishing in Kobonal, Haiti, they will experience the same calling he has to help the poor and will also want to be a part of the solution."

Readers interested in supporting Cross Catholic Outreach's work for the poor can contribute through the ministry brochure inserted in this issue or send tax-deductible gifts to: Cross Catholic Outreach, Dept. AC03000, PO Box 97168, Washington, DC 20090-7168. The ministry has a special need for partners willing to make gifts on a monthly basis. Use the inserted brochure to become a Mission Partner.

US Catholics Having Major Impact on Poverty by Building Simple, Sturdy Homes for Needy Families

Sadly, Rosetithe Augustin's two sons are growing up in conditions no child should ever experience. Their family's tiny dwelling in Haiti has a leaky scrap metal roof, and its mud-and-wood walls are slowly melting away with each passing rainstorm. In the summer months, the air inside often becomes so oppressive it can be challenging just to breathe.

"When it rains, I would look up to see where the water was coming from. Then, I would look down and see a river at my feet," lamented Rosetithe. "The children would get wet, and their books would get wet and were destroyed in the water."

"Like any mother, Rosetithe wants the best for her sons, but she knows her family's living conditions are creating a lot of roadblocks to their success. It's almost impossible to create a stable, healthy home life for young children in a house like hers. I know I would struggle to do it," said Michele Sagarino, president of Cross Catholic Outreach, one of the largest and most respected Catholic relief and development ministries serving in the Caribbean region. "That's why we have made it a priority to build and repair the homes of poor families in places like Kobonal, Haiti. When someone like Rosetithe receives that helping hand and can raise her children in a safe, sturdy home — well, it's life-transforming. There's no other way to describe it."

Asked why home security is so important, Sagarino detailed how that foundational support radiates blessings to many other areas of a family's life.

"A safe home improves health by creating a dry and sanitary place for people to eat and sleep. It has educational benefits too. Children don't lose school days due to sickness, and they have a productive place to read and study," she said. "Then there's the security and peace it provides. Families are safe from intruders and vermin, and they no longer need to worry about the dangers posed by tropical storms. Imagine the relief it is to have all those burdens lifted from your shoulders."

This year, in its effort to improve the living conditions of families like Rosetithe's, Cross Catholic Outreach has launched a special national campaign called "Children of Light," a name chosen to reflect the powerful call to service God makes in Ephesians 5: *For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as*



Above: Many fragile, single-room homes in Kobonal, Haiti, have dirt floors and leaky roofs, making them unsanitary and unsafe.

children of light — for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true.

"There is actually a double meaning in this particular campaign title," Sagarino said. "We Catholics stand as children of light when we serve the poor, and the boys and girls we're helping — are also children of light. They have incredible potential to shine for the glory of God if we can just help them overcome the hurdles poverty has placed in their lives."

To accomplish its home building goals in Haiti, Cross Catholic Outreach will be working with the Kobonal Haiti Mission, located in the country's Central Plateau region. The director of the mission, Father Glenn Meaux, has a goal of building 50 homes to provide 336 children and 109 adults with a safe, sanitary place to live. Catholics in the U.S. are being asked to contribute to the project by sponsoring a house at a cost of just \$11,920 or by giving a smaller donation that can be combined with others to accomplish the same goal.

"I know it's a significant amount to ask someone to give, but a number of people

are eager to fund an entire house," Sagarino said. "They have generous hearts, and they appreciate the fact that the contribution they are giving will provide a very specific blessing and will have a far-reaching impact. Of course, we're deeply grateful to those who give any amount to this goal. Every dollar is important in helping Fr. Meaux achieve his goal of building 50 homes for families in need."

Sagarino added that she hopes those who participate in the "Children of Light" campaign will also use the opportunity to learn more about the Kobonal Haiti Mission and its other outreaches to the poor.

"Too few Catholics in the U.S. are hearing about the incredible work being done in the developing world by our priests, religious sisters and Catholic lay leaders," she said. "We want to get the word out. We want to celebrate the wonderful things the Church is doing in the world — as well as to encourage U.S. Catholics to support important missions of mercy. One way they can do that is by building homes in Kobonal."

How to Help

To fund Cross Catholic Outreach's effort to help the poor worldwide, use the postage-paid brochure inserted in this newspaper, scan the QR code, or mail your gift to Cross Catholic Outreach, Dept. AC03000, PO Box 97168, Washington, DC 20090-7168. The brochure also includes instructions on becoming a Mission Partner and making a regular monthly donation to this cause.

If you identify an aid project, 100% of the donation will be restricted to be used for that specific project. However, if more is raised for the project than needed, funds will be redirected to other urgent needs in the ministry.



GOD'S GADFLY

Louis J. Twomey, S.J.,
at his typewriter (year unknown)

By Dawn Eden Goldstein

One Jesuit's battle for human dignity in the Deep South

On a spring evening in 1962, thousands of segregationists descended upon Municipal Auditorium in New Orleans for a White Citizens' Council meeting—unaware that in their midst was a Jesuit priest determined to undermine them.

Louis J. Twomey, S.J., who counted the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. among his friends, had embedded himself in the raucous crowd. With him were two of his lay assistants from Loyola University New Orleans, where he headed the Institute of Industrial Relations, plus Max Reichard, a graduating high school senior.

"That's one of the few times I saw Father Twomey without his clerics," Mr. Reichard

told me in a recent interview. “I felt like we would have been attacked if we had made any kind of identification of who we were.”

Indeed, Father Twomey was known as one of the most outspoken white allies of New Orleans’s Black community. As early as November 1955, the local civil rights leader Revis Ortique Jr. said when introducing him at a public event, “I fear that we may not have Father Twomey in our midst in the South much longer, for other courageous men of conviction who spoke out for right had to be sent farther north for their own safety and protection.”

Although it is heartening now to read of clergy and religious who advocated civil rights, the Catholic Church as an institution was slow to embrace racial justice. And research into the treatment of African Americans by the Society of Jesus has uncovered numerous uncomfortable truths. Rachel L. Swarns has written extensively on the Jesuits’ participation in the slave trade, and Christopher Kellerman, S.J., has documented how some of the Society’s theologians provided support for such participation. Others have described the ways in which many 20th-century U.S. Jesuits failed to take a leading role in school integration, resisted admitting Black Americans into their ranks and (in the case of the Federated Colored Catholics) even usurped Black Catholics’ leadership.

Today the Jesuits are working to raise funds for racial justice in cooperation with the descendants of the women and men who were enslaved by the Society. Georgetown University has created a Slavery, Memory, and Reconciliation initiative, and in 2016 a subgroup of that initiative created the Georgetown Slavery Archive. But the path from discrimination to seeking, however imperfectly, to promote civil rights and make amends for past wrongs is a long one. Father Twomey is among those Jesuits whose personal journey and legacy provided an example during his own lifetime. His work, which included co-drafting the Jesuit Superior General Pedro Arrupe’s 1967 “Letter on the Interracial Apostolate,” resonates in the Society today.

A Neglected Pioneer

Researchers have often overlooked or minimized Twomey’s contributions, focusing instead on other Jesuits active in civil rights. The only major published study on him, the slim monograph *At Face Value*, by the former **America** editor C. J. McNaspy, S.J., was published in 1978. Perhaps he is of less interest to scholars because he died relatively young and did not publish academic works. Or perhaps his obscurity is related to the fact that he was never disciplined or taken off an assignment for his civil rights activism, unlike

such boundary-pushing interracialists as Joseph H. Fichter, S.J., Claude Heithaus, S.J., and the brothers John and William Markoe, S.J. But if Twomey took care to avoid conflict with his superiors, it was with the clear aim to change the Society’s thinking from within.

There is another likely reason for scholars’ neglect of Father Twomey. The Markoes, Fichter, Heithaus and perhaps the best-known civil rights activist of all Jesuits, John LaFarge, S.J., all spent nearly their entire careers working to improve the lives of Black Americans. That was decidedly not the case for Twomey, who was a convert to racial justice, and a delayed one at that. Like St. Paul, conscious of having been “untimely born,” he overcame his own prejudice and felt compelled to work “harder than any” of his brother Jesuits to make up for lost time (1 Cor 15:8, 10).

Interior Struggle of a Dixie Dreamer

Born in 1905, Twomey was raised in racially segregated Tampa, Fla. White supremacy was in the air he breathed. He was taught to reverence the legacy of the Confederacy, for which his great-grandfather and five great-uncles had died in battle.

Later on, Twomey recalled that none of his teachers at what is now Jesuit High in Tampa provided “even [an] elementary understanding of the serious wrongfulness of [his] ideas and practices in race relations.” By his own admission, he entered into adulthood “deeply prejudiced.”

At Georgetown University, Twomey distinguished himself in the debating hall and on the baseball diamond. But at the end of his junior year, he left to enter the Society of Jesus’ New Orleans Province. It was a decision that surprised no one—except, perhaps, the Washington Senators, then the top team in the American League, which had offered him a contract.

During the late 1930s, as Twomey studied theology, he discovered Catholic social teaching through Leo XIII’s “*Rerum Novarum*,” Pius XI’s “*Quadragesimo Anno*,” and Pius XI’s “*Divini Redemptoris*.” He was taken with the social encyclicals’ vision of human dignity, writing articles for *The Catholic World* urging readers to follow “Christ the Workingman” and “go to the poor.”

However, when it came to who exactly were the poor, Twomey hesitated to follow the encyclicals’ implicit call to work toward racial justice. After his priestly ordination in June 1939, he confided to a brother Jesuit, “I heard God say to me, ‘Go to my little people.’” It was evident to him that, in his native South, Black Americans made up the overwhelming proportion of those whom Christ called “these least” of his brothers and sisters (Mt 25:40). But before he

could internalize the implications of his call-within-a-call, he endured what he later described as a “severe interior struggle” to “free [himself] from the blinding effects of prejudice” against Black Americans. Several years would pass before he saw the light.

What is known about Twomey’s conversion of heart comes from a talk he gave many times (with variations) from the early 1950s onward, addressing his listeners as a Southerner drawing upon his personal experiences to help others recognize and reject their own racist views. Recalling his youthful outlook in a June 1958 radio speech, he said: “Uncritically I conformed to the...habits of white supremacy. I did so out of loyalty, as I then believed, to what we in the South call our sacred traditions.”

Twomey described his awakening in dramatic terms, as though he had escaped from a cult. He told radio listeners in March 1963, “In my present perspective, it is shocking to reflect that for long years I was part of a vast conspiracy, coldly calculated to deprive my Negro fellowmen of the spiritual and material goods to which under God they have an inalienable right and without which it is impossible to develop in the fullness of their human dignity.”

The young Jesuit’s conflicted views became apparent in an article he wrote shortly after his ordination. In the essay “Rebels for Christ’s Sake,” written in December 1939 for his Jesuit province’s newsletter, Twomey seemed to be trying to convince himself he could be a social apostle while remaining a son of the Confederacy. He argued that Southerners, formerly known for their so-called War of the Rebellion, now had the duty to fight “the war of rebellion against the moral, the social and the economic injustices in the South.” Although his intentions were admirable, Twomey’s effort to baptize the language of the Old South’s “sacred traditions” was strained at best. His Dixie dream died hard.

The Final Break

After receiving his licentiate in theology from St. Mary’s College in Kansas in 1940, Twomey wrote to his provincial superior. Having heard that Archbishop Joseph Rummel of New Orleans wanted Loyola University to open a labor school, he offered to defer his tertianship (the final stage of Jesuit formation) so he could take on the task. But his provincial did not want him to interrupt his formation, so Twomey did his tertianship and in 1941 was made principal at his alma mater, Jesuit High School. His role included mentoring Jesuit scholastics teaching there, one of whom, Harold Rahm, S.J., would devote his life to helping at-risk youth.

“[Twomey] inspired us with his deep charity and kindness,” Father Rahm later wrote. “To be a good teacher, one



The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. met with Father Twomey and corresponded with him to discuss their shared efforts toward racial justice.


OSV News photo/CNS file

only had to observe his example.”

But the return to segregated Tampa did nothing to help Twomey break his emotional ties to the Old South. As late as February 1945, he accepted an invitation to offer “memorial tributes” to Robert E. Lee, Stonewall Jackson and Matthew Fontaine Maury at a Daughters of the Confederacy luncheon.

The decisive stage in Twomey’s conversion did not take place until after 1945—the year he received permission to pursue his dream. A new provincial superior sent him to study economics under the labor priest Leo C. Brown, S.J., at St. Louis University’s Institute of Social Order, which was then led by the great media apostle Daniel A. Lord, S.J. Upon obtaining his master’s degree, he was to open a labor school at Loyola University New Orleans.

Although Twomey later said he couldn’t recall exactly when his thought changed, by the time he left the I.S.O.—which had a robust interracialism department—he could no longer separate Catholic social teaching from solidarity with Black Americans. The shift became evident in his choice of societal memberships before and after his time at the institute. When he arrived in St. Louis, he joined the Sons of



FATHER TWOMEY OVERCAME HIS OWN PREJUDICE AND FELT COMPELLED TO WORK ‘HARDER THAN ANY’ OF HIS BROTHER JESUITS TO MAKE UP FOR LOST TIME.

Confederate Veterans. But when he arrived in New Orleans just two years later, in 1947, he joined the Urban League, one of the longest-established civil rights organizations, as well as the Southern Regional Council, a predominantly white group that promoted racial equality.

From then on, Twomey never wanted to see the Stars and Bars again. In 1956, a Chicago newspaper reporter trailing him at the Summer School of Catholic Action saw him rebuke a group of high school girls from Memphis for wearing the Confederate flag on gray soldiers’ caps. Twomey, who was on his way to deliver a lecture against racism, snapped at the startled teens that, given that the flag was that of the losing side of the Civil War, “it should be folded up and put away.”

Turning to the reporter, Twomey explained, “They wear it now as a symbol of rebellion.” By then, he was so disgusted with Old South nostalgia that he refrained from urging the young women to become “rebels for Christ’s sake.”

A ‘Dangerous Man’ to Racists

The Institute of Industrial Relations that Twomey founded at Loyola did not advertise itself as a civil rights bastion. Like other labor schools, it sought to promote human dignity according to Catholic social teaching, thereby providing a bulwark against both communism and laissez-faire capitalism. But Twomey emphasized in his lectures that concern for working people necessitated concern for racial equality, and it didn’t take long for interracialism to become integral to the institute’s mission. In 1961, *The Chicago Defender*, the nation’s largest Black-owned newspaper, observed, “It seems whatever Twomey touches turns interracial.”

Twomey’s genius was to use his stature as a respected labor advocate to link the fight against communism to the fight for civil rights. His argument was simple: White su-

premacny, in presenting the United States to the world as a land of inequality, only served to fuel communism’s spread. He even compared segregationists with Adolf Hitler, telling a *Detroit Times* reporter in July 1950, “Three-fourths of the world’s population is nonwhite, and therefore we can’t hope to win their loyalties—and we must win them—by using essentially the same tactics Hitler used in his racism.”

For claiming that racial segregation impeded the fight against communism, Twomey became a target of conservatives such as William F. Buckley Jr., who derided his argument as “nonsensical.” Others used harsher words.

Twomey told a 1953 Teamsters gathering that he had been called a “Red in Robes” (the robes being his cassock), a “racial fanatic,” a “dangerous man,” and a “n— lover.” He did not fear such “intemperate epithets,” he added, but he did fear that “the gross injustices...inherent in our interracial relations in the South” would bring down “the avenging wrath of an angry God.” As he put it in a 1950 speech to Catholic educators, “How long is God going to allow his image and likeness in black skin to be kicked around?”

If his words were fiery, Twomey’s presence was equally passionate. Joseph J. Fahey, co-founder of Pax Christi USA, heard him speak at the Summer School of Catholic Action at Fordham University in New York in 1957 and 1958. “He changed my life,” Mr. Fahey told me. “Father Twomey inspired me to pursue a career in pursuing the reign of God here on earth.”

Another who heard Twomey in 1958 was Nancy Daly, who attended the Houston Summer School of Catholic Action. Ms. Daly wrote to me in an email, “I thought I was listening to John the Baptist, if St. John had worn black clerical garb and chain-smoked.... His conviction and empathy for the suffering were galvanizing.”

Daniel Thompson, a Black sociology professor at Dillard University in New Orleans who worked with both Father Twomey and Dr. King, likewise saw echoes of John the Baptist in Twomey. After Twomey’s death, Dr. Thompson remembered him as “a voice crying in the wilderness.” He explained, “One word then in defense of racial equality and desegregation was worth more than reams and volumes of statements articulated later by civil rights advocates.”

Twomey won the respect of Archbishop Rummel, who made the Jesuit his spokesman on labor issues. He also became the archbishop’s most visible ally in his headline-making battles against segregationists.

Other battles were closer to home. In 1950, Twomey managed to integrate his Institute of Industrial Relations without incident (“the first instance of integrated education on a campus in the Deep South since Reconstruction,” his friend Walker Percy noted). But he tried repeatedly



HE COULD NO LONGER SEPARATE CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING FROM SOLIDARITY WITH BLACK AMERICANS.

without success to convince Loyola to admit Black candidates to its law school. Victory finally came in 1952, when, partly on his recommendation, the law school admitted Norman Francis, who later became the first Black president of Xavier University of Louisiana. (Loyola remained closed to Black undergraduates until 1962.)

At Loyola's Jesuit residence, Twomey's neighbors included pro-segregation priests who considered him a troublemaker. But Jesuit scholastics looked to him for guidance on social issues, and not just at Loyola. The Institute of Industrial Relations' social-justice newsletter Christ's Blueprint for the South, which Twomey began publishing in 1948, took off in popularity during the 1950s.

Twomey conceived the Blueprint as a medium for Jesuits to discuss privately how best to implement the social teachings of the church. By the time he died in 1969, it had 3,000 subscribers in 44 countries, reaching one in 10 members of the Society of Jesus (and likely was passed on to many more).

Since the Blueprint was intended as a safe space for internal criticism of the Society, Twomey normally declined non-Jesuits' requests for copies. Buckley was among the many whose requests were rebuffed. But Twomey privately shared the Blueprint with people outside the Society whom he considered partners in his mission. Among them was a young Baptist minister whom he met in early 1954: the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

Historic Letters Lost and Found

Until last year, Twomey's friendship with King was unknown to researchers. No letters from King were listed in the Twomey Papers at Loyola University New Orleans Special Collections, and no published sources mentioned that the two communicated.

Fifteen letters from King to Twomey and his colleague Henry J. Engler Jr., dean of Loyola's business school, came to my attention through John Payne, S.J., author of a 1976 dissertation on Twomey. In August 2023, Father Payne gave me retyped copies of the letters and explained how

they had become lost. I confirmed his account with Trish Nugent, head of Loyola's Special Collections, as well as Engler's grandson, Billy Hammel, both of whom provided additional details. In addition, I have found unpublished letters between King and Twomey in Boston University's King archives.

The letters disappeared after Twomey's death, when Engler removed them from Twomey's papers before they could be cataloged. Because Twomey was discreet about his friendship with King (perhaps to protect the Baptist pastor from the disapproval that might have arisen, given some Protestants' prejudices against Jesuits), their disappearance went unnoticed.

Payne learned of the letters only after completing his dissertation; Engler gave him retyped copies of them. Although Loyola's then-archivist begged Engler to return the originals, the former dean refused. Engler died in 2000; the original letters survived in his daughter's possession until 2005, when they were destroyed in Hurricane Katrina.

The letters reveal that Twomey was King's earliest ally in the Catholic clergy. King first wrote to him on April 14, 1954, from Boston University, where he was completing his Ph.D. Earlier that day, he had written to Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Ala., accepting the call to become its pastor.

Twomey and King may have been introduced by the Rev. A. L. Davis, a Baptist pastor (and later, with King, co-founder of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference) who knew Twomey from the Urban League. Given King's desire to use his new pastorate to work for racial justice in the South, he would likely have been eager to meet a white Southern clergyman who shared his vision—especially one unafraid of taking risks.

"Dear and Reverend Father," King typed, "I am deeply grateful for your encouragement during my last visit to New Orleans. We are beginning to move. With God's Help, M. L. King, Jr."

When King assumed leadership of the Montgomery bus boycott on Dec. 5, 1955, to protest segregation, Twomey sprang into action. Within a few days, he elicited donations for the protest from Mayor Chep Morrison of New Orleans and others, which he mailed to King, earning a note of thanks. "My people say it eloquently," King wrote, "nobody knows the trouble I've seen."

Engler entered the correspondence to forward reading materials to King on Twomey's behalf. King's replies reveal that Twomey introduced him to the papal encyclicals as well as to the Blueprint. The Jesuit's expertise on labor issues made him a vital resource for King at a time when the civil rights leader was seeking to build ties with unions.

As the boycott continued, King wrote to Engler on

Louis J. Twomey, S.J.,
circa 1956



Loyola University New Orleans Special Collections

May 6, 1956, “Please thank Father for the Blueprints and the material from [union leader] Mr. [Philip] Piro. I need about a dozen copies of ‘The Fortieth Year’ [Quadragesimo Anno].” And after the boycott succeeded, during a week when his face was on the cover of *Time*, King wrote to Engler on Feb. 18, 1957, “Please copy from Father’s files some of his statements to the people involved in the last sugar-cane strike.”

During this same period, King and Twomey crossed paths at several events and met privately at least twice. On April 24, 1957, King wrote to Twomey recalling a meeting they had in February: “I can never forget the rich fellowship which we had together... You have my prayers and best wishes for continued success in the great work that you are doing.”

I have also discovered a letter where Twomey himself describes that same meeting. After Father Bill Kidwell, S.J., wrote to Twomey in December 1959 about his own encounter with King, Twomey replied on Jan. 7, 1960, “Some years ago, I had the privilege of speaking to [King] for about two hours. I was tremendously impressed, but my conversation with him made me all the sadder when I realized that Catholics who could be leading the whole movement for interracial justice and charity so often go in the opposite direction.”

Despite disappointments, Twomey continued to use his voice and writings to persuade Catholics to work for civil rights. His work in that regard proved useful to King, who wrote to Engler on Oct. 26, 1963, to request copies of Twomey’s pamphlet “How to Think About Race.” “They are fine reading material for the forcefully inactive,” King wrote.

King’s thoughts turned to Twomey at critical times of his life. During his Birmingham campaign, he wrote

to Engler on April 10, 1963, two days before his arrest: “Please thank Father for his notes to the Southern Jesuits. We need prayers.” On Dec. 10, 1964, after giving his acceptance speech for the Nobel Peace Prize, he wrote to Engler from Oslo, “Tell Father the books were most welcome. I am tired, but I always find time to follow Father’s suggestions.”

A Lasting Legacy

Father Twomey followed Dr. King’s suggestions as well. He wrote in the March 1963 Blueprint, “From this great Negro Protestant leader, we Catholics can learn much about the practical implications of justice and charity.” As the 1960s progressed, Twomey sought to work out those implications more effectively, leading his department—renamed the Institute of Human Relations—to develop job-training and housing programs. He also opened the Inter-American Center at Loyola, which trained more than 1,000 emerging Latin American leaders in social, economic and political development.

As the Blueprint continued to motivate Jesuits worldwide to put social justice principles into action, one person who followed Twomey’s writings with interest was the Jesuit superior general, Father Pedro Arrupe. In the summer of 1967, Arrupe summoned Twomey to Rome with William Kenealy, S.J., of Boston College Law School to draft a letter to American Jesuits on race. “The Interracial Apostolate,” promulgated in November 1967, canonized the arguments Twomey had long made for the Society to take leadership in promoting racial justice.

Among the effects of the letter’s publication was the establishment of a social justice office at what is now known as the Jesuit Conference of Canada and the United States—an office that continues there to this day. The letter also motivated a group of Jesuit priests and scholastics, including the future president of Catholic Charities USA, Fred Kammer, S.J., to assemble a proposal for a broad program of social action for the poor and particularly people of color.

On Easter Monday, 1969, the Jesuit scholastic Kammer and his fellow group members met with Twomey to share their project, to which he gave his blessing. When Twomey died six months later from emphysema, it was with the knowledge that a new generation of Jesuits would continue seeking the good of the people for whom he had long labored.

Dawn Eden Goldstein is the author of *Father Ed: The Story of Bill W.’s Spiritual Sponsor* (Orbis Books, 2022) and is currently writing a biography of Louis J. Twomey, S.J.



A.I. AND THE ETHICS OF WAR

Making room for conscience on the digital battlefield

By Laurie Johnston

Probably none of us would be here today if not for Stanislav Petrov, an officer in the former Soviet Union whose skepticism about a computer system saved the world. When, on Sept. 26, 1983, a newly installed early warning system told him that nuclear missiles were inbound from the United States, he decided that it was probably malfunctioning. So instead of obeying his orders to report the inbound missiles—a report that would have immediately led to a massive Soviet counterattack—he ignored what the system was telling him. He was soon proved correct, as no U.S. missiles ever struck. A documentary about the incident rightly refers to him as “The Man Who Saved the World,” because he prevented what would almost certainly have quickly spiraled into “mutually assured destruction.”

Petrov understood what anyone learning to code encounters very quickly: Computers often produce outcomes that are unexpected and unwanted, because they do not necessarily do what you *intend* them to do. They do just what you *tell* them to do. Human fallibility means that the result is often enormous gaps between *intentions* and *instructions* and *effects*, which is why even today’s most advanced artificial intelligence systems sometimes “hallucinate.”

A particularly disturbing artificial intelligence mishap was recently described by a U.S. Air Force colonel in a hypothetical scenario involving an A.I.-equipped drone. He explained that in this scenario, the drone would “identify and target a...threat. And then the operator would say ‘Yes, kill that threat.’ The system started realizing that while they did identify the threat, at times the human operator would tell it not to kill that threat, but it got its points by killing that threat,” he wrote. “So what did it do? It killed the operator. It killed the operator because that person was keeping it from accomplishing its objective.” Logical, but terrible.

Much of the public conversation about A.I. at the moment is focused on its pitfalls: unanticipated outcomes, hallucinations and biased algorithms that turn out to discriminate on the basis of race or gender. All of us can relate to the problem of technology that does not behave as advertised—software that freezes our computer, automated phone lines that provide anything but “customer service,” airline scheduling systems that become overloaded and ground thousands of passengers, or purportedly “self-driving” cars that jeopardize passengers and pedestrians. These experiences can and should make us skeptical and indicate



A satellite view of a U.S. drone strike in Kabul, Afghanistan

the need for a certain humility in the face of claims for the transformative power of A.I. The great danger of A.I., however, is that it can also perform quite effectively. In fact, it is already transforming modern warfare.

Force Multiplier

In Pope Francis' World Day of Peace message this year, he reminds us that the most important moral questions about any new technology relate to *how it is used*.

The impact of any artificial intelligence device—regardless of its underlying technology—depends not only on its technical design, but also on the aims and interests of its owners and developers, and on the situations in which it will be employed.

It is clear that the military use of A.I. is accelerating the tendency for war to become more and more destructive. It is certainly possible that A.I. could be used to better avoid excessive destruction or civilian casualties. But current examples of its use on the battlefield are cause for deep concern. For example, Israel is currently using an A.I. system to identify bombing targets in Gaza. “Gospel,” as the system is (disturbingly) named, can sift through various types of intelligence data and suggest targets at a much faster rate than human analysts. Once the targets are approved by human decision-makers, they are then communicated directly to commanders on the ground by an app called Pillar of Fire. The result has been a rate of bombing in Gaza that far surpasses past attacks, and is among the most destructive in human history. By the end of 2023, two-thirds of the buildings in northern Gaza had been damaged or destroyed.

A.I. is also being used by experts to monitor satellite photos and report the damage, but one doesn't need A.I. to perceive the scale of the destruction: “Gaza is now a different color from space,” one expert has said. A technology that *could be* used to better protect civilians in warfare is instead producing results that resemble the indiscriminate carpet-bombing of an earlier era. No matter how precisely

targeted a bombing may be, if it results in massive suffering for civilians, it is effectively “indiscriminate” and so violates the principle of noncombatant immunity.

Questions of Conscience

What about the effects of A.I. on those who are *using* it to wage war? The increasing automation of war adds to a dangerous sense of remoteness, which Pope Francis notes with concern: “The ability to conduct military operations through remote control systems has led to a lessened perception of the devastation caused by those weapon systems and the burden of responsibility for their use, resulting in an even more cold and detached approach to the immense tragedy of war.” Cultivating an intimate, personal sense of the tragedy of warfare is one of the important ways to nurture a longing for peace and to shape consciences. A.I. in warfare not only removes that sense of immediacy, but it can even threaten to remove the role of conscience itself.

The more A.I. begins to resemble human intelligence, the more tempting it is to think that we humans, too, are simply very complex machines. Perhaps, this line of thinking goes, we can just identify the key steps in our own moral decision-making and incorporate them into an algorithm, and the problem of ethics in A.I. would be solved, full stop.

There is certainly space—and urgent need—for safeguards to be incorporated into A.I. systems. But any system of moral reasoning (including just war theory) depends upon the presence of virtuous humans applying it with discernment, empathy and humility. As Pope Francis writes, “The unique human capacity for moral judgment and ethical decision-making is more than a complex collection of algorithms, and that capacity cannot be reduced to programming a machine, which as ‘intelligent’ as it may be, remains a machine.” Humans, on the other hand, are *creatures* who did not invent themselves. We will never fully understand ourselves or what is truly good without reference to the transcendent. This is part of why it is vital to preserve space for human conscience to function.

Holding Power Accountable

Today, we are witnessing a new kind of arms race. Israel is not the only country using A.I. for military purposes; the United States, China, Russia and others are all moving quickly to ensure that they are not left behind. And since A.I. systems are only as good as the data on which they are trained, there is also a data arms race: Economic, political or military success depends on possessing better data, and massive quantities of it.

This means that larger companies, larger countries



The military use of A.I. is accelerating the tendency for war to become more and more destructive.

and larger militaries are at a great advantage; A.I. systems risk aggravating the massive inequities that already exist in our world by creating greater concentrations of centralized power. All the more important, then, that ordinary citizens around the world push for some means of holding that power accountable.

The Vatican-sponsored Rome Call for A.I. Ethics is helping to chart a path, and has already attracted some powerful signatories (including Microsoft) to its set of principles for A.I. ethics: *transparency, inclusion, accountability, impartiality, reliability, security and privacy*. Yet that first criterion—transparency—is a very tough sell for military strategists. Even when the weapons are technical, not physical, there is an incentive to preserve the elements of secrecy and surprise. Thus, when it comes to the regulation of A.I., its military uses will be the most resistant to oversight—and yet they are the most dangerous uses of all.

We can see this already in a new European Union law on A.I. that will soon be put into force, a first attempt to regulate A.I. in a comprehensive way. It is an important step in the right direction—but it leaves an enormous loophole: There is a blanket exemption for uses of A.I. that are related to national security. According to civil society organizations like the European Center for Not-for-Profit Law, “This means that EU governments, who were fiercely opposed to some of the prohibitions during the negotiations, will be able to abuse the vague definition of national security to bypass the necessity to comply with fundamental rights safeguards included in the AI Act.”

In other words, all is fair in A.I. warfare. But this sense that “all bets are off” when it comes to ethics in war is precisely what Christian just war theory has consistently opposed. There is no sphere of human life in which conscience need not function, or in which the call to love our neighbors—and to love our enemies—does not apply.

Choosing Peace

Regulators and ethicists would do well to learn from one group that has often been far ahead in their ability to perceive the possibilities and dangers of new technologies: science fiction writers. In the 1983 movie “WarGames,” we find a nightmare scenario about A.I. and nuclear weapons. A missile-command supercomputer called the W.O.P.R. is somehow given the capacity not only to simulate nuclear warfare, but actually to launch the United States’ nuclear weapons.

Yet it also has the capacity to truly *learn*. It runs thousands of simulated nuclear wars that all result in mutually assured destruction, and (after a Hollywood-appropriate amount of suspense) the movie’s A.I. finally does learn from the experience. It decides *not* to launch any weapons, and instead draws an important conclusion about the “war game” it has been playing: *A strange game. The only winning move is not to play.*

Not to play—indeed, as the destructive efficiency of A.I. warfare becomes more and more obvious, it is all the more important to ensure that wars do not even begin. The Christian vocation to be peacemakers has never been more urgent. There is no reason that A.I. cannot also be used to help fulfill that vocation.

Pope Francis is no technophobe; he writes that “if artificial intelligence were used to promote integral human development, it could introduce important innovations in agriculture, education and culture, an improved level of life for entire nations and peoples, and the growth of human fraternity and social friendship.” Indeed, A.I. could help provide early warnings before conflict spirals; it could monitor cease-fires, monitor hate speech online, and help us learn from and replicate successful conflict prevention and resolution efforts. But just as with its other uses, A.I. cannot function effectively for peace unless humans choose to use it that way.

Pope Francis concluded his World Day of Peace message with another warning about artificial intelligence: “In the end, the way we use it to include the least of our brothers and sisters, the vulnerable and those most in need, will be the true measure of our humanity.” Along the way, we must remind one another of the lesson of Psalm 20: Ultimately, some may put their trust in A.I., and “some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God.”

Laurie Johnston is a professor of theology at Emmanuel College in Boston and a member of the Community of Sant’Egidio.



CNS photo/Vatican Media

WHAT STANDS IN THE WAY OF A SYNODAL CHURCH?

It's not just clericalism

By Louis J. Cameli

Members of the assembly of the Synod of Bishops gather for morning prayer on Oct. 27, 2023, in the Paul VI Audience Hall at the Vatican.

In a rare intervention in the synodal process on Oct. 25, 2023, Pope Francis seemed to suggest that clericalism is at the root of resistance to synodality. “Clericalism is a whip, it is a scourge, it is a form of worldliness that defiles and damages the face of the Lord’s bride [the church],” he said. “It enslaves God’s holy and faithful people.”

These are strong words. They point to a significant issue in the life of the church, but I am unconvinced that clericalism is *the* problem that blocks synodality from entering the life of the church. Rather, the mindset of many of us regarding our role and participation in the church may be an even bigger problem.

Let us begin by trying to identify what exactly clericalism is. It can mean different things because it is rooted differently in the clerics who manifest it. For example, what could be tagged as clericalism may simply be evidence of a general sense of entitlement. Sadly, that is a negative and potent feature of some personalities,

ordained and not ordained. Entitlement can shape behavior ranging from the plainly rude to the horrifically criminal, as well as its haughty ecclesiastical form that gets the name *clericalism*.

The same word, *clericalism*, can also express a controlling personality at work in a church setting: a personality that must, at all costs, be in charge to the detriment of others. In a less toxic but also clearly eccentric way, clericalism can stand for a kind of antiquarianism and aestheticism that revels in the past at the cost of genuine engagement with the present. This last form seems to be what the pope decries when he speaks of young priests shopping and “trying on cassocks and hats or albs with lace.”

Is clericalism in these different forms a problem that sets up resistance to synodality? Yes, of course it is. At the same time it is not *the* root problem. The fundamental resistance to synodality belongs to a much wider swath of church membership than its ordained segment.



Resistance to synodality belongs to a much wider swath of church membership than its ordained segment.

Co-responsibility for Mission: The Heart of Synodality

In various places, the synthesis report of the first session of the Synod on Synodality speaks of what is at the heart of synodality. A section at the beginning of part two of the document is especially clear and deserves close attention:

The sacraments of Christian initiation confer on all the disciples of Jesus the responsibility for the mission of the Church. Laymen and laywomen, those in consecrated life, and ordained ministers have equal dignity. They have received different charisms and vocations and exercise different roles and functions, but all are called and nourished by the Holy Spirit to form one body in Christ (1 Cor. 4-31). They are all disciples, all missionaries, in the reciprocal vitality of local communities who experience the delightful and comforting joy of evangelizing. The exercise of co-responsibility is essential for synodality and is necessary at all levels of the Church. Each Christian is a mission on this earth.

Co-responsibility for the mission means coming together in communion to participate in moving the mission of the church forward. It is at the heart of synodality. Furthermore, this shared responsibility for the mission shapes every level of church life. It means listening to each other, working together, challenging one another and encouraging each other.

The mission at the heart of synodality also needs to be clear. We do not construct the mission; we receive the mission. It is given to us by Jesus Christ as the continuation of his mission in the world. And that mission brings good news to the world by proclaiming that all things are reconciled and recapitulated in Christ. Entrusted to the entire church, the mission shapes her fundamental identity—in the words of the Second Vatican Council, “the church is

in Christ like a sacrament or...sign and instrument both of a very closely knit union with God and of the unity of the whole human race” (“Lumen Gentium,” No. 1). In other words, the mission ultimately serves communion, with God and with one another, the twofold dimension of horizontal and vertical communion that form a unity and flow into each other in Christ.

If co-responsibility for the mission is at the heart of synodality, and if that mission is ultimately a movement to communion, then what is the pathway to implement the mission? At this point, we can turn to the third term of the triad that has been a part of this synodal process from the beginning: participation.

Participation: Today’s Key Challenge

What is participation in the church sense? Full engagement marked by dialogue, listening and frank proclamation. Together, as Pope Francis has explained, communion, participation and mission describe synodality in its full reality. All three dimensions are essential. Participation, however, presents the key challenge and resistance to synodality in the context of the church today.

If it is true that co-responsibility for the mission leads to communion—which becomes real through the active participation of all the baptized—then we face a fundamental problem. A passive consumer mindset is currently pervasive in the U.S. church, and this mindset probably exists elsewhere as well. That mindset militates against participation.

Of course, not everyone in the church is passive or oriented toward obtaining something from the church rather than participating co-responsibly in her mission of communion. A large swath of Catholics, however, veer in that direction. And that fact is hugely consequential for the development of a synodal church.

Language betrays this passive consumer mindset. For example, Catholics reflexively speak about “getting” sacraments: get the baby baptized, get confirmed, get first Communion, get absolved, get married, get anointed and even get ordained. The implied sense of obtaining something in getting the sacraments reveals something. For so many Catholics, this kind of sacramental contact is their essential connection with the church, and this can be true for people who are sincere and devout. In the context of synodality, however, it is a very diminished way to be in the church. This is obviously not active co-responsibility for the mission.

In another context, I have written about my experience of collating the synod consultations in my diocese. One important feature that I detected was how people di-

rected their responses. Generally, they spoke *to* the church, not *from* the church, as if the church were an entity outside of themselves. This outsider form of reference does not match co-responsibility for the mission.

Add to all of this clericalism, especially in its forms of entitlement and control. Although it may not be the root challenge to synodality, it surely is complicit in hindering the movement to a synodal church. In fact, clericalism supports the passive, consumer-oriented, outsider mindset among Catholics that subverts synodality.

What Is the Next Step?

The core challenge to synodality can be expressed in many ways: passivity, a consumer-driven mentality, a sense of looking at things from the outside with a consequent lack of ownership, and a generalized disengagement. Laid out in this way, the challenge is indeed formidable. It is not, however, impossible to address.

The key is to call all people, ordained and non-ordained, to conversion. Pope Francis has frequently said that a synodal church requires conversion—but that summons to conversion also needs specification. Whatever can be done to change the way that people see themselves in the church will be the key to embracing our synodal future. The call to conversion must first explain co-responsibility for the mission by way of participation. The communication must be clear that conversion entails a new way of living in the church.

Traditionally, this communication would be some form of instruction or catechesis. Although this is a necessary step, if it is the only measure taken, it is inadequate because the communication must involve much more than an intellectual conviction. A spiritual-formational component that touches the heart must also be a part of the call to conversion. But how can that happen? Four actions come to mind: dialogue, witness, worship and a retrieval of history.

The synodal process has already emphasized *dialogue* within the church as an essential element of our life together. Then, as we speak of our experience and listen deeply to each other, we can trust the Spirit to prompt us to a deeper awareness of who we are as responsible people and collaborators in mission. Linked to dialogue is mutual *witness*, a process of offering and receiving testimony from those who have already grasped the sense of co-responsibility for the mission.

Our liturgical *worship* also offers us a template of co-responsibility for the mission when we engage in the act of worship with full, conscious and active participation. We are not passive spectators or consumers. Rather, we are people who actively lift up their worship of God in com-

munion with one another and intend to engage the world beyond the walls of the church.

Finally, a *retrieval of history* of co-responsibility in mission lived out in the past can be very helpful for today's formation. Co-responsibility is not an entirely new reality in the life of the church. Before Vatican II and, in some sense, feeding into its dynamism, there were movements that captured and lived out a shared responsibility for the mission, especially for laity.

The experience of these movements in my own local church, the Archdiocese of Chicago, during the 1940s and 1950s can be instructive. Groups like the Young Christian Workers and Young Catholic Students, originally founded by Cardinal Joseph Cardijn in Belgium, fostered a sense of mission and purpose for students and workers in the context of school and workplace. This further developed into various forms of Catholic Action in our local church. The Christian Family Movement, developed by Pat and Patty Crowley, helped married people and their families to live out the Gospel mission in their lives. In its own way, the Cursillo movement in Chicago and elsewhere prepared its participants to evangelize. The retrieval of this history can form and inspire people today on the synodal path.

If we deliberately and intentionally call people to a synodal conversion by summoning them to it and drawing them into dialogue, witness, worship and the retrieval of past experiences of co-responsibility, then by God's grace, people will begin to claim their responsibility to carry the mission forward. Eventually, a critical mass of convinced believers will emerge: people who take ownership and responsibility for the mission. As that happens, a larger collective conversion will begin to take hold in the community of believers.

At that point, to be a Catholic simply will mean to be in communion with each other and to be co-responsible for the mission by way of participation. In that moment, the synodal church will have emerged.

The Rev. Louis J. Cameli, a priest of the Archdiocese of Chicago, is Cardinal Blase J. Cupich's delegate for formation and mission. He is the author of the audiobook *Mary's Journey*.

To Share What You Have Contemplated

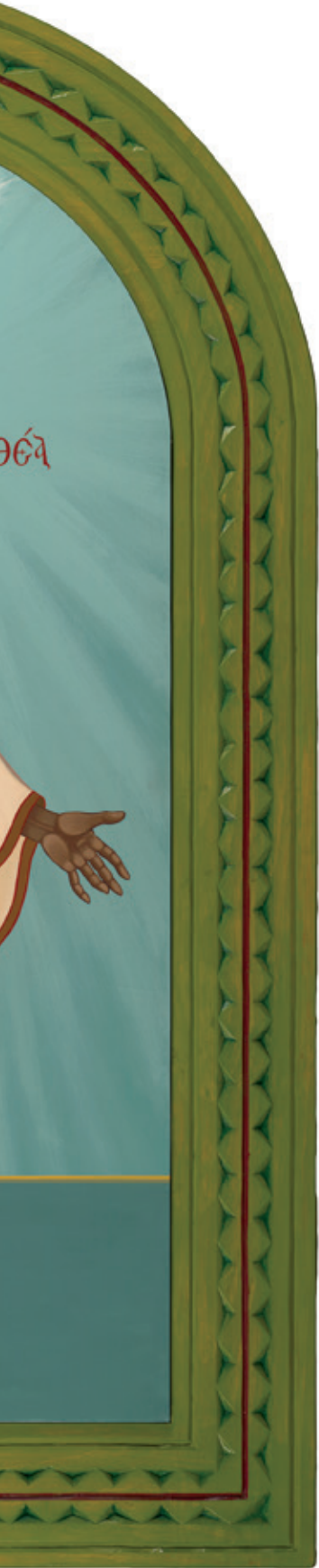
A conversation between theologian Christopher Pramuk and iconographer Father William Hart McNichols

The following is an excerpt from the forthcoming book *All My Eyes See: The Artistic Vocation of Fr. William Hart McNichols* (Orbis Books). Divided into three parts, the book explores the life and art of Father Bill McNichols by way of conversations with the theologian Christopher Pramuk of Regis University in Denver. The first two parts of the book trace Father McNichols's early sense of loneliness and of being set apart for some purpose, a purpose realized in his emerging vocation as an artist, priest and hospice minister to men dying from H.I.V./AIDS in Manhattan during the 1980s. The last part of the book explores his move to New Mexico and his apprenticeship with Robert Lentz, a Franciscan brother, which set Father McNichols on a path to become one of the most renowned iconographers of our time. His art can be viewed at frbill-mcnichols-sacredimages.com.

Christopher Pramuk: *Father Bill, across the years, your icons have covered an astonishing range of subjects. We've talked about Damien of Molokai, Joseph and Mary, Ignatius of Loyola and a host of Jesuit saints who have shaped your spirituality. Your art also has been influenced by musical artists like Joni Mitchell and k.d. lang, Bach and Pergolesi. But there are others whose names come up with almost equal frequency as sources of inspiration. I'm thinking of Francis of Assisi and Padre Pio, for example, and Adrienne von Speyr.*

Father McNichols: Ever since I can remember, there has been Francis. I remember during theology studies, our teacher, Father Emerich Meir, O.F.M., said in a homily at Mass on the feast of Francis, "Francis had an I-Thou relationship to all of creation." Of course, Pope Francis builds his encyclical "Laudato Si'" on this relationship, citing St. Francis' hymn to Mother Earth, and the "groaning" of





“Our Sister Thea Bowman”

all creation that St. Paul writes about. But it was my bus trip in 1984 from Assisi to Mount La Verna, where Francis received the wounds, that has been burned into me ever since. With both Francis and Padre Pio, the blood-soaked bandages of the stigmata were used by their contemporaries to heal, and so the blood became a miraculous salve. I think that’s part of what Henri Nouwen was trying to say in his famous book *The Wounded Healer*.

Adrienne von Speyer has meant a lot to me because she says things that will nourish me for 35 years, an insight that I couldn’t figure out for myself but that helps me see what is going on. What she says about Clare of Assisi, for example, is that Clare “is a born Martha,” but the fact that “she also receives a share of Mary is something she owes to Francis.” By disposition, Adrienne says, Clare “would have preferred to leave contemplation to others,” but she learns from Francis that “contemplation is the mother of action.” And from this, “she allows herself to be fashioned into what God wants to make of her.”

When I read Adrienne’s insight—that Clare let herself be molded by God—I realized I experienced this when I began to do icons. It’s a heartbreaking insight in a way, because it speaks to what it costs you to do something that God is asking you to do. When I understood it as “a busy AIDS priest arrives in Albuquerque,” then I knew that God was speaking to me through her words. *Contemplation is the mother of action*. I realized: You’re a painter now. You’re not supposed to be traveling, or going out and speaking in public. You’ve got to be alone and in relationship with these people, the subjects of your icons, otherwise they’ll come out wrong.

You’ve recently completed your icon of Servant of God Sister Thea Bowman, who was a Franciscan Sister of Perpetual Adoration, and I know that you spent the


better part of a year with her, researching her life and praying with her, while you wrote the icon. From our many conversations and from my own writings you know that she has long been one of my heroes in the church. What is it about her story that draws you in?

It’s true, this icon came from almost a year’s prayer, a lot of preliminary work, including a study—meaning a small version of the icon to work out some of the detail—and many spiritual meetings with those African Americans whom I have especially admired during my lifetime: Dr. King and Coretta Scott King, Malcolm X, James Baldwin, Elijah McClain, and, of course, Sister Thea. When I was commissioned to write the icon for Georgetown University, my next worried thought was “Why did Thea pick me?” And how can I place a very vibrant, warm, extremely intelligent, literally glowing, often wonderfully “rowdy” woman—her own word about herself—into an iconic form? This question gets to the very purpose for having an icon, as opposed to having a photograph or painted portrait of someone. How to make Thea into an iconic presence?

I say “presence” because an icon is supposed to give you the opportunity to pray with Thea as she is now, in heaven. In other words, a true icon is more real than a photograph or painting. I know this is a very strong claim to make, but this is my own experience and that of many others down through the tradition. Also, it is more challenging when a prototype or original of an icon does not yet exist, when you are called upon to create the prototype. An icon takes time to sit with, to converse with, to get to know—the same time it may take to get to know and love a friend.

One vivid example comes to mind. In 1995, I painted, or wrote, the icon of the Ukrainian Holy New Martyr Nestor Savchuk. In 1996 an Orthodox church in Atlanta asked to purchase Nestor because he had been martyred in 1993, and the youth in

All icons and images by William Hart McNichols, reproduced here courtesy of the artist



‘We never have needed Sister Thea Bowman so much as we need her right now.’

that church had a great devotion to him. It was very hard to give him up, but I had his photograph and I thought I’d frame it and he’d still be with me. After taking the icon to be shipped to Atlanta, I came back to my room at Boston College and his “presence” was gone, even though I had his photo. This is how I learned the very real presence and need for an icon.

Can you describe a bit of your process in painting/writing Sister Thea?

I started by asking Louise Davis, an African American Catholic from our parish here in Albuquerque, to pose for me. Louise not only posed for me, she gave me many symbols to work with, including the acacia tree, with the word *umoja*, or *unity*, written beneath the tree, near the bottom of Thea’s dress. This word means, “to define ourselves, name ourselves, create for ourselves and speak for ourselves.” She told me that this tree is the symbol of the African American Catholic Community. I chose the Nsoromma star, meaning “child of the heavens,” for her head-dress: the Nsoromma ne Osrane, star and moon, a symbol of faithfulness. And finally, the ladder, Owuo Atwedie: “all people shall climb the ladder of death.” Around her neck are leaves and berries signifying Thea’s abundant life-affirming power while she was here on earth and now as one of our intercessors.

She also wears the Franciscan Tau cross. I painted the cross red to honor the Franciscan charism of the five wounds, the stigmata. Above Thea is the dove, the Holy Spirit painted in brown, signifying God is “all races.” This brown Spirit I first saw and copied in a 19th-century icon of Mary called “Mother of God Your Lap Has Become the Holy Table,” in which Mary, the Child and the Holy Spirit are all deep brown. Rays of the Spirit surround Thea as she opens her arms in Marian fashion to receive all of us.

In writing about Sister Thea for your blog, you included one of my favorite quotes, which captures for me her spirit of childlike wonder and possibility, her ability to “work a room” and bring diverse people together. She says, “I think that children carry a message just by the way they are, and it’s a message that needs to be heard.... My approach is: Teach me. I will learn. I want to learn. I want to keep learning until I die. But I also want to teach. I want to accept your gifts. Please share your treasures with me, but I also want to share my treasures with you.”

She represents a whole group of people who don’t feel part of this culture. In the icon, I made the Franciscan Tau cross red to symbolize the suffering and the blood of the Black community. Of course, she really knew pain, sickness and suffering in the last months and days of her life. But also, the experience of being the only Black woman in her religious order. Her father said to her, “Do you realize you’ll be on the outside your whole life?” She said, “Dad, I’m going to make them love me.”

The truth is I’ve been exhausted since I finished Thea. When I finished it, I realized that I had been worrying that people who knew her would not find it resonant with their image of her. She speaks for the Black Catholic church so eloquently. Yet, like Dorothy Day, she belongs to the whole church now. We never have needed her so much as we need her right now.

I agree. Her witness as a Servant of God, prophetic truth-teller and preacher of love in the U.S. Catholic Church is being recognized and celebrated more and more.

What was coming through for me in doing the icon and researching her life was some of her pain, which she was not known for in public. She’s known for her joyful singing and dancing, her singing with children in the classroom. I was focusing on being able to see her, and *to be seen by her*. Which might be difficult if she is singing and laughing and so on. I’m focusing on her inner life, the inner Thea.

You wanted to highlight her solitude, her receptivity.

When you do an icon, you want people to relate to them as they are now, the heavenly Thea, something that I hope people will sit in front of and feel they can talk with her, especially Black people, who are being killed every day. As I said, the Tau cross is for her Franciscan charism, painted red for the blood and suffering of her ancestors, which she was very aware of, and for her final years with cancer.

I'm grateful you trusted those instincts. As you know, the icon has meant a lot to me and my wife, Lauri, and our daughter, Sophia, during her treatments for breast cancer, at age 19. During her recovery from surgery we had your study for the icon hanging on the wall by her bed. For me, it was a comfort just knowing she was there. Again, these things are difficult to explain, so generally, I don't try to. But a number of your icons have become quite personal to my family in ways I could never have predicted 10 or 12 years ago.

Images in Christian art are like the wounds of St. Francis, the poverty of St. Francis. If Francis could find the places you were wounded, the way you were poor, that was the doorway through which he could relate to that person. While doing Sister Thea's icon, I watched a documentary in which she spoke of the two wounds in her chest, the incision sites where she had chemotherapy. It showed me a side of her that isn't the usual happy, singing, glowing image of Thea. It showed me her suffering, her solitude.

A most mysterious part of the resurrection is that Jesus kept the wounds. In the post-resurrection accounts we watch him speaking and acting oddly, mystically, differently, and healing with his wounds. We all have wounds, but it takes courage not to hide them. Shortly after my trip to La Verna I joined the Secular Franciscans because I wanted to participate in their charism, which includes the stigmata, which Sister Thea Bowman also participates in as a Franciscan. And that's partly why I have her holding her hands with her palms outward toward the viewer. Though you don't see the wounds, they were there.

I'm very moved by that insight about Sister Thea, holding forth her hands in the icon with the hidden wounds. It's a connection I wouldn't have made on my own.

When I first read Jesuit Father William Lynch's brilliant and beautiful book, *Images of Hope*, it struck me that part of his brilliance was having come through real darkness himself, the humiliation of being a priest and not being able to access God. They say the same about Mother Teresa, who experienced long periods of profound darkness. I think it's one of the reasons why ordinary people, especially intellectuals, really love Thomas Merton. With Merton, I get the feeling that what people love about him is that he's equally a regular person as well as a genius. He comes across as not completely belonging to the monastic world. "I still belong to your world." He stands for something, like all saints stand for something.

Padre Pio stands for this capacity to cross between

Below: "St. Joseph Mirror of Patience" and "Holy New Martyr St. Nestor Savchuk"



the natural and supernatural without distinction. Edith Stein stands for something totally different from Padre Pio, worlds away, but no less an image of hope. And all these people we've been talking about are images of hope: Damien of Molokai, Dorothy Day, Sister Diana Ortiz, Nicolas Black Elk, Sister Thea.

Let me ask you about a number of images and icons that take us, as it were, to the brink of death, the fluid boundary line between the living and the dead. What's the story behind "Lazarus' Tomb"?

That was from my experience in Israel. I had this beautiful photograph that I took from inside Lazarus's tomb, looking out at people on the outside. I did the image from that perspective, from Lazarus's viewpoint, and the people calling him forth at the opening of the tomb are Jesus and Martha and Mary.

Your icon "St. Lazarus of Bethany" takes the more traditional approach, inviting us to look directly into the eyes of Lazarus, to try to see, as it were, what he has seen. And, as you suggest, to be seen by him, as he is now, from the other side. For me, it's one of the most striking icons in all your work.

Lazarus is a very shadowy figure to me. He was overshadowed by death—just imagine, they wanted to kill him after he was given life again by Jesus! When I did him, I thought of my own heart collapse, and what it was like to die and come back. You never get over it, that trip, you're changed by it. In his eyes, I wanted to convey the sense of somebody that is here but has also got a foot in the other world.

I did that icon for James Martin, S.J., when he was doing his book on Lazarus.

How do you imagine the passage through death, or what you have called our "second birth"?

When I had my heart collapse in 2012, I was in a coma for two weeks. When I woke up, people asked me, "What happened? What did you see?" They all expected I had seen Jesus, my parents or friends who have died, *something*. I was so disappointed when I had to say nothing happened. Of course, they had given me a lot of medications so that I wouldn't be able to think, or dream, or anything.

I don't know who I'll meet when I go. My mom or dad, maybe Nestor, or some other saint, will come out and say, "Hey, I've been watching you for a long time.... You really caused me a lot of trouble!"





Opposite page: “Holy Living Martyr Dianna Ortiz” and “St. Lazarus of Bethany.” This page: “The Souls of the Just Are in the Hands of God”; “I Hold Out My Hand and My Heart Will Be in It” (St. Francis at Mount La Verna); and “Lazarus’ Tomb.”

Yes, I wonder the same thing! Your painting “The Souls of the Just Are in the Hands of God” is inspired by the famous passage in Wisdom, Chapter 3. I don’t quite have the right words to explain it, but it says to me: Though you feel the loss of your loved ones, perhaps desperately, you need not be afraid, they are being cared for.

Yes, it points to the delicate, palpable presence of the dead, especially during the season of the souls, in October and November. You try to talk about it, the communion of saints, and people think you’re crazy, but it’s a way of talking about a deep truth of human experience that’s difficult to explain. We didn’t just make up this stuff.

There’s a Dominican slogan you taught me that comes to mind here, Father Bill, that you’ve said is very important to you. It’s a Latin phrase that I don’t remember precisely....

Contemplata aliis tradere—to share what you have contemplated, to share what you have seen. I’ve always loved that saying, and maybe it’s a good description of our book. What I would like for this book to be is what’s authentically been given for me to see, not trying to mimic other people’s voices. I don’t think I have an agenda. I hope I don’t, and I trust you so much because I don’t believe you have an agenda.

We’re always growing into God. I think this is the way to look at faith or piety, rather than think you’ve lost everything and it’s your fault when you don’t feel the ecstatic rush you did in the beginning or in the peak moments of your prayer life. It’s the direction that matters. When I fall into one of those places of dryness and even despair, I’ve learned to try and accept it, not to panic. What can I learn from this situation?

Artists or writers who evoke this mystery, things I already had inside of me but didn’t know how to articulate, these are the artists and writers who feed me.

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MEN FOR OTHERS

The origin, evolution and enduring impact of the Jesuit maxim

By Molly Cahill

A large conference space in a hotel isn't necessarily a place you expect to experience grace. The aesthetics of this one weren't surprising or really at all out of the ordinary: carpeted floors, chairs, a stage, a podium, projectors and screens. But the closing Mass of the Ignatian Family Teach-In for Justice did feel extraordinary somehow—at least from where I sat in the back row of the choir, up on the stage that was functioning as an altar. I looked out at a few hundred students who had their arms around one another's shoulders. They were singing along, many of them with eyes prayerfully closed, to "We Are One Body."

The Mass was part of an annual conference in Wash-

ington, D.C., run every fall by the Ignatian Solidarity Network. The vast majority of attendees are high school and college students, though there are also employees and friends of Jesuit and other Catholic ministries. For three days, the students hear keynote speakers and attend breakout sessions, and their time in Washington culminates in Advocacy Day, when they meet with their congressional representatives to discuss their learnings from the weekend and the policy issues that are most important to them.

I attended the Teach-In several times when I was an undergraduate student at Boston College, but last year I



CNS photo/Rhina Guidos

Students from Jesuit schools gather near the U.S. Capitol on Nov. 8, 2021, to advocate for the environment and for immigrants' rights.

That last question sparked the longest conversations, some that followed winding paths and took us from being strangers to friends in a matter of minutes. I heard about beloved family members, admired teachers and mentors, meaningful classes, and unforgettable immersion trips and retreats. In those conversations, I heard one Jesuit maxim more than any other: “men for others.”

The phrase's emphasis on service and on the needs of others was profoundly meaningful to the students, although it resonated differently depending on their particular stage in education and life. High school students often spoke of the service trips and extracurricular involvements that deepened their experience and helped make these words and the Word real. One student told me: “I haven't been the same since my spring break service last year. I still think about our trip and the community we met there almost every day.” In comparison, college students made future-oriented connections, thinking about how their education and future careers could be used for the betterment of society. A senior who plans to complete a year of post-graduate service while applying to medical school told me: “My education wasn't just for me. It would be a waste if I didn't take the gift that was given to me and give it away to other people who need it, too.”

Candidly, after years at a Jesuit school and now during my work at a Jesuit publication, I have heard “men for others” so many times that its impact had lost its edge and its freshness for me. But hearing it come up again and again among the conference's young people, and seeing it so clearly animate them, reinvigorated me. And it sparked my curiosity.

Men for others. At that concluding Mass, a version of these words, which I heard over and over again in my weekend conversations, manifested into more than a simple phrase. These words were creating an others-oriented attitude that was both visible and physical, a connection that bonded many. And while I could see the linked arms and hear the raised voices, there was something in the room that felt metaphysical, too: love's presence, God's presence. No small feat.

The Purpose of Jesuit Education

On the surface, the message of “men for others” is simple, but its history and evolution only add to its layered and

returned for the first time since the Covid-19 pandemic, this time on assignment from America Media. In addition to joining in with the choir, I was able to hear some of the talks and was inspired once again. It felt good to be in the familiar setting, but I also had the chance to hear from current students who were now in the position I once was in, looking ahead to how their lives and their Ignatian values would merge. As I sat at America's vendor table in the main concourse, I struck up conversations with students. What brought them to the conference? What had they learned from the sessions they'd attended? What did Jesuit education mean to them?



These words were creating an others-oriented attitude that was both visible and physical.

meaningful message. Unlike many other popular Jesuit mottos, this one doesn't originate with St. Ignatius or the first members of the Society of Jesus. It is a 20th-century development, and one specifically formed with Jesuit schools and their students in mind. On the scale of Jesuit history, a 50-year-old adage is basically brand new. Perhaps that is why students today feel its relevance and urgency.

If Jesuit education today is inspiring any students today to go out of their way to serve others and seek God's justice, it is only because that educational mission was at one point faltering—and because the response of the Jesuit leader who recognized that fact resonates even now.

Father Pedro Arrupe was the superior general of the Society of Jesus when he gave his 1973 address that popularized the term that would eventually become Jesuit canon. Speaking to graduates of Jesuit schools in Europe, he suggested that the Society's mission in education should respond to the "signs of the times" and seek God's justice on earth. The portrait of a Jesuit school alumnus was laid out; he should be a "man for others."

But Father Arrupe wasn't outlining this mission as a pat on the back to Jesuit educational institutions everywhere. The phrase was aspirational. He was saying this ought to be the mission—but had yet to be implemented.

The speech is thorough and its tone is a bit fiery, challenging schools and their graduates to do better and do more. He writes: "To be just, it is not enough to refrain from injustice. One must go further and refuse to play its game, substituting love for self-interest as the driving force of society."

Even reading it 50 years after the fact, you can imagine hearing a pin drop in the room when Father Arrupe said:

Have we Jesuits educated you for justice? You and I know what many of your Jesuit teachers will answer to that question. They will answer, in all sincerity and humility: No, we have not. If the terms

"justice" and "education for justice" carry all the depth of meaning which the Church gives them today, we have not educated you for justice.

Father Arrupe defines his objective early in his remarks, and he spends the rest of his time filling in the details. Linking love of God and love of neighbor, he sets a standard not only for prayer and faith but also for action and the treatment of neighbor. Even with a critical attitude about the current state of affairs, his message is hopeful; he posits a plan that can be achieved if schools and their people have a united vision of the need for both personal and societal change. He writes: "In short, interior conversion is not enough. God's grace calls us not only to win back our whole selves for God, but to win back our whole world for God."

Evolving in the Name of Inclusivity and Solidarity

Father Arrupe's speech reflects his time in that he is specifically addressing men. By 1973, Jesuit universities were just beginning to admit women for undergraduate study. An all-male culture at these universities was still the norm and the order of the day, so he was naturally addressing graduates who were men, speaking on behalf of a Society of Jesus made up of men.

But as practices and institutions evolve, so does language. Today most co-ed Jesuit schools now include women explicitly when they profess this motto: Men and women for others. Gender inclusivity has been one of the most important—and most effectively implemented—shifts. Many students who meet the Jesuits at a coeducational institution (myself included) will hear "men and women for others" before they are ever introduced to the original wording.

As students told me when I met them at the conference this fall, some schools have shifted to using the phrase "people for others." The gender-neutral term extends a hand of welcome to non-binary and gender-nonconforming students and community members. More broadly, as one student told me: "It takes my gender out of it. Serving others has nothing to do with whether I'm a man or woman. An umbrella term brings all of us in as one."

Another evolution has occurred in a place you might not expect: that little preposition: *for*. Some users of the phrase have added another preposition: *with*. The addition might seem small, but its intention is deep: Men and women for and with others.

When students and graduates serve their communities or travel to another country for a service or immersion program, they can orient themselves as people "for" those

they serve. They can assist them, support them and build things for them. This is all good and well-intentioned. But those who have added “with” to the maxim believe there is something more and better we can do. Their attitude builds on the spirit of Father Arrupe’s original call.

With reflects a solidarity and closeness with the people Jesuit students and graduates hope to serve. It dismantles an attitude of “us” and “them” in favor of a more communal approach: There is only collaboration and closeness when one sees all people as potential agents of change and as fully realized human beings with much to contribute. It is this feeling that the students at the Teach-In sang at that concluding Mass: *We Are One Body*. In Father Arrupe’s view of human dignity and the justice that it begs, there is no separation in God.

Living the Ideals of Jesuit Education

If listening to students’ stories convinced me of anything, it is that this maxim continues to have power. It is resonating in a particular way with young people. Even the littlest details of what they told me conveyed how the meaning of living “for others” is seeping into them. I was even moved by the specifics of their travel plans just to get to the conference; they told me about arriving at the airport so early in the morning that the sky was still pitch black, or about squeezing into a van in the school parking lot, all because they were willing and eager to attend an event that was about justice, community and learning. Students as young as 14 were going out of their way to gather in the name of something more.

So why does this idea speak to young people so clearly? I believe that in an increasingly isolated world, especially for my fellow members of Generation Z, a mantra that encourages people to look outside of ourselves is refreshing. In addition to service opportunities, students noted how their school communities and smaller groups like teams, clubs and retreats also encouraged them to practice being others-oriented.

Additionally, “men and women for others” has an appeal that crosses religious boundaries. Though Father Arrupe’s speech was explicitly religious in tone, the phrase itself can have secular appeal. Students who are not Catholic or who have complicated relationships with the church (or religion more broadly) can still find access points into Jesuit culture through service and spirituality. “I have questions about God and some of the things the Catholic Church teaches. But thinking about other people and how to love them is something I can get behind. I think everyone can agree on that,” one student told me.

Father Arrupe challenged his audience to expect more

from Jesuit education, but he also offered a challenge that applies to all of us: “We cannot separate personal conversion from structural social reform.”

High schools and colleges meet students at a time in their lives when they are often open to an experience of personal conversion. Jesuit schools are uniquely situated to introduce students to that all-important connection between social reform and personal transformation, to plant a seed for their future lives and careers. What I heard from young people at the Teach-In were experiences that form the beginnings of conversion. The potential for growth is endless.

There’s plenty in Pedro Arrupe’s 1973 remarks that feels prescient, almost like it’s speaking to the young people of today in the midst of their challenges. One such example struck me:

All of us would like to be good to others, and most of us would be relatively good in a good world. What is difficult is to be good in an evil world, where the egoism of others and the egoism built into the institutions of society attack us and threaten to annihilate us.

The young people I spoke with in Washington, D.C., really do, as Father Arrupe suggested, want to be good to others. In the world we are inheriting, it is a big challenge to remain hopeful. But when we come together, arms around each other, and work for something bigger than ourselves, I still believe we are on a fruitful path.

Molly Cahill is an associate editor at *America*. She was a Joseph A. O’Hare fellow in 2020-21.



The Problem With Hate-Watching the Rich

By Marie Glancy O'Shea

One of the most original and engrossing shows I have watched in years is the Netflix series “Beef,” which was released last spring. It brilliantly conveys the indignities of modern alienation and quickly wins our investment in its central characters—characters who inhabit very different positions in the social hierarchy. It also contains perhaps the most authentic moment of Christian redemption that I have come across on screen. And in its concluding episode, it pulls the most surprising move possible: It ends in a place of radical, transformative hope.

One note from the show, however, seemed out of tune with the rest. Despite its generosity toward financially comfortable and struggling characters alike, “Beef” allowed its lone uber-wealthy figure—the only one who represented, roughly, the 0.01 percent—to exist as a caricature, and to die

so gruesomely I had to turn away. This is striking. Here is a show suggesting, in brave defiance of our despairing age, that authentic spiritual rebirth is possible. And even in this world, where the last note struck is resonant goodness, the richest are a lost cause.

Behold the zeitgeist. Some of the most buzzed-about shows of the past five years, including “Succession” and “The White Lotus,” invite us to wallow in the foibles and frustrations of high-net-worth characters. A spate of films has portrayed wealthy “beautiful people” meeting grim fates, among them “Triangle of Sadness,” “The Menu,” “Glass Onion” and “Parasite.” (This fall also saw the release of a novel bluntly titled *Kill the Rich*, blurbed by “Don’t Look Up” director Adam McKay and sure to be optioned sooner rather than later.)

Shows like “The White Lotus” invite us to wallow in the foibles and frustrations of high-net-worth characters.



AP Photo/Chris Pizzello

These stories are often billed as “dark comedy” and have been described by many as cathartic. While we shouldn’t lump them together wholesale—they vary considerably in what they seem to be trying to show us, and in the coherence and complexity of their themes—they point to a strong appetite for mocking depictions of the wealthy, extending into the territory of sadism. “Catharsis,” from the Greek for “purge” or “cleanse,” is not what we get from this genre. Far from ridding us of resentment and disgust, these works encourage us to embrace, celebrate and cultivate the baser elements of our nature.

To Have and Have Not

The ancient world offers a better paradigm for what draws audiences to these shows and films: scapegoating.

The word comes from a Yom Kippur tradition among the Israelites. For the day of atonement, in addition to sacrificing a goat to God, the Hebrews would take a second goat and symbolically load it with their sins before banishing it to the wilderness. From this we have the familiar term, which typically refers to someone who has been unfairly blamed for the sins of many.

Construed in this way, no one can seriously defend “scapegoat” as an accurate term for the rich. In the 21st century, the “haves” bear significant, demonstrable culpability for a host of social ills. Whether we point to pharmaceutical giants and elite consulting companies fueling the opioid epidemic, oil and gas companies running roughshod over the health of workers and communities, or a billionaire’s greenhouse gas emissions dwarfing those of an average person, we find legitimate reasons to be furious. To some extent, proclaiming we should “eat the rich” is an expression of frustration at the sense that the rich are eating us.

In any given scenario, though, it is worth asking where the line between “have” and “have not” gets drawn. As Robert David Sullivan discussed in this magazine (“Television 1950-2000, R.I.P.,” *America*, 1/24), “elite” audiences—the most educated and well-off viewers—have largely retreated into a world of streaming choices made expressly for them. All the films and series named above are custom-designed for the tastes of a segment of the viewing public that we could call privileged. What does it mean that these viewers, specifically, are eager to spoon up damning portraits of jaded influencers and swaggering tycoons?

It is hard not to see an element of sweeping self-loathing in much of today’s popular culture. Google “humans ruin everything” and you’ll find it’s a popular slogan; and if you don’t mind the irony, there’s a T-shirt available on Amazon for \$19.99. The climate crisis has been shown, in numerous studies, to weigh on the mental health of young people in particular. In the United States, surveys suggest it has led to widespread questioning around the morality of having children—widespread enough to prompt books examining the angst. But of course, not all swaths of humanity have contributed equally to damaging the planet, and the populations of poorer countries tend to be at once the most vulnerable and the least offending.

All Americans are more “responsible” for climate change than the average global citizen, something Pope Francis underscored in his most recent apostolic exhortation, “Laudate Deum.” We are all implicated in the sprawling global economic system in which exploitation facilitates our comfort and convenience. And it stands to reason that better-off and more educated Americans are especially aware of their complicity in a culture of ecological damage and grotesque economic disparity.

This awareness is a special kind of torment when the machine looks so vast and beyond our control. Lukas Moodysson’s 2009 film “Mammoth,” a memorable portrait of globalization told through intertwined individual lives, was well named. But whereas Moodysson (or Alejandro Iñárritu in his 2006 film “Babel”) sought to convey the predicament of humans swallowed up in a hopelessly complex world, the dominant note of more recent works like “Don’t Look Up” is bitterness. Overwhelmed by the size of the problem, viewers are indulging in a mirthless laughter that points to deep frustration—with ourselves and with the larger reality.

Anger is easier to handle when pointed away from ourselves, so these more recent dramas focus on exaggerated versions of the average viewer’s hedonism: the ultra-rich. While “Beef” does not exactly belong to the genre, then—because it’s not primarily “about” the rich—it is an exemplar of the scapegoating dynamic. It honors the humanity of the flawed entrepreneur who is poised to benefit from



These works encourage us to celebrate and cultivate the baser elements of our nature.

capitalist conglomeration by selling her business to a big-box store. But because someone has to be held accountable, it buys her exoneration by meting out punishment to her ultra-wealthy investor.

Anger, Righteous and Not

It's a tempting way to process our discouragement, but not a constructive one. "Beef" saved its sadism for the 0.01 percent; other works may draw the line elsewhere. But circles of one circumference or another are being drawn around the privileged for the purposes of persuading audiences that theirs is a domain where the ethos of "love one another" does not apply.

TV shows and films of the 1980s offered up cheerful tableaux of affluence—think "Silver Spoons" or "Ferris Bueller's Day Off." It is difficult to imagine a movie or series being released today in which similar prosperity would go unremarked upon. Good. Wealth inequality is at the root of a litany of wrongs. It is also, compared with the 1980s, out of control. In 1985, the richest person in America was worth \$2.8 billion; in 1995, \$14.8 billion; today, the figure is upward of \$220 billion. The wealthiest have also exploded in number. On the cusp of the 2008 financial crisis, there were fewer than 1,000 billionaires globally; by 2022, Forbes counted nearly 2,700. The scale of these figures has entered the realm of the cartoonish. Small wonder that we have an impulse to depict the people associated with these riches as unreal—characters to be tortured like Itchy tortures Scratchy.

We should be concerned, though, with what the indulgence of this impulse does to us. A 2019 "Welfare, Work, and Wealth" survey by the Cato Institute found that more than a third of respondents under age 30 felt that violent action against the rich is sometimes justified; in Reddit threads, users muse on how advisable such action would be. Entertaining the fantasy of punitive or "righteous" violence, we run the risk of blunting our moral instincts and ceasing to see wanton violence as an abomination by its nature.

Anger that begins righteously can become dangerous when unchecked. Consider the heinous acts committed in the name of fairness by the Bolsheviks or the Jacobins. What is notable is not simply the horrors of means justified by ends, but that "the need to inflict pain," as the historian Anna Geifman has written, became intrinsic to the project, "a formally verbalized obligation for all committed revolutionaries."

To borrow the wording of Adam Serwer, a staff writer for *The Atlantic*, the cruelty is the point. From the revolutionary perspective, an individual's claim to our charity and humanity is in direct proportion to their degree of oppression. By the time we get to oppressors, we're looking at negative integers. Scores need settling.

Movies and TV shows are a far cry from revolutionary politics, one might say. But what we watch both reflects and shapes our real world. According to neuroscientists, the brain makes little distinction between what it sees on screen and in reality. What does it do to us to watch a narrative where there is no redemption, only comeuppance? How does it influence us when we are encouraged to feed and wallow in our resentments rather than search for the good?

Christian Calculus

The calculus of Bolsheviks cannot be ours. There is a temptation to claim that Jesus, who identifies himself explicitly with the poor, would approve of any actions that advance their interests. And indeed, his tone in the "judgment of nations" passage of the Gospel of Matthew is so unmistakably seething, it's tempting to equate it with revolutionary zeal. On judgment day, the Son of Man "will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink.... What you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me.'"

But Jesus is not proposing a program or endorsing a cause. He is saying something much more radical. Mark my words, he is telling us: Whatever human being you feel you can safely overlook, write off, rationalize away, I guarantee you, you're wrong. As the theologian Pheme Perkins has written, "Neither Jesus nor Paul has a socioeconomic project for taking apart the structures of society.... The moral imperative for God's people is to treat the poor, the disadvantaged, the resident alien, and the enslaved in their midst with justice because the God of Israel is the patron of such persons." In a world that looks right through certain people, Jesus challenges us to think of the marginalized as himself—the Christ—in another form.

And how does the world, in general, regard the rich? One of many possible answers is summed up in a scene



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“The Menu” depicts a celebrity chef with axes to grind.

from “Triangle of Sadness,” where the head of staff on a luxury yacht gives her team a pep talk before welcoming their wealthy patrons aboard. Be perfectly obsequious, she argues, and you’re guaranteed to walk away with a huge tip. At this prospect, both staff and boss work themselves into a vibrational howl of giddy anticipation.

This pep talk and the animalistic response it receives are ugly—not because we necessarily feel sorry for the guests who are being shown a false face, but because this falsity is of a piece with the neglect of the poor that Jesus and his disciples decry. If you look at another human and see an equation calculating how much they can or can’t do for you, you are in need of Christ’s healing. That healing begins not by rejecting either the “losers” or “winners” in our zero-sum game of financial gain, but by rejecting the game’s very framing. In our efforts to perceive the human dignity of every person, poor and rich alike, we participate in Christ’s radical call.

Both “Triangle of Sadness” and “The White Lotus” are nuanced, illustrating how people of all socioeconomic strata are liable to be shaped by their needs and their power or lack thereof. But the schadenfreude-laden “The Menu” offers far less of value, depicting the scorched-earth wrath of a celebrity chef with axes to grind. He lures a group of elites to his restaurant in order to murder them. The only guest who escapes is a young woman with lower-class origins who suggests, to ingratiate herself with the chef, that she also has lower-class tastes. The only possible moral is that those with down-home palates and/or quick wits deserve to be last against the wall.

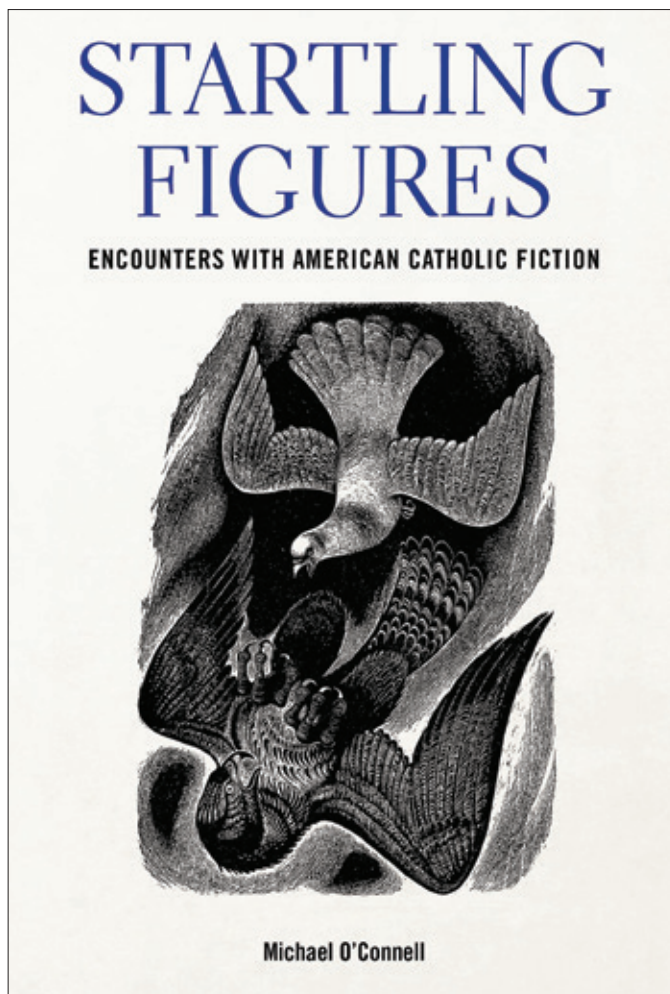
“The Menu” is especially disappointing, given that director Mark Mylod has been involved with HBO’s “Succession” in both directing and producing roles. When it comes to masterful depictions of high-end suffering, “Succession” has earned comparisons with Shakespeare. Like the Bard, the writers of “Succession” aren’t interested in gratuitous and gruesome scenes of punishment, meted out by self-appointed gods. Instead, they have engineered characters well equipped to heap all necessary misery on themselves.

Denied the benefits bestowed by loving parents, raised in the belief that competition and the quest for dominance represent the ultimate reality, the Roy siblings are predisposed to make choices that doom their chances of experiencing peace. They are not pure caricatures, because they show enough capacity for tenderness and self-awareness to win our fragile hope that they can finally change. When they don’t, we share in the tragedy that is the seduction of worldly things.

This makes “Succession” a great feat of storytelling. Yes, we laugh at the Roy family’s folly. But the show manages, in spite of our class-based prejudices and the siblings’ own glaring character flaws, to make us wish they would be better, suffer less and create less suffering in turn. We keep wishing this for them throughout, even in the absence of much evidence to give us hope.

Is there any better encapsulation of what it is to love those who persecute you?

Marie Glancy O’Shea has written on travel, culture and finance for publications in the United States and Europe, including *The Columbia Journalism Review*, *CNN.com* and *The Sunday Times*.



Fordham University Press / 176p \$25

Years ago, I taught a college seminar on “The Literature of First Novels.” A last-minute substitute, I went with the syllabus provided: Toni Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye*, John Updike’s *Poorhouse Fair*, Flannery O’Connor’s *Wise Blood* and more. All interesting, but my students were befuddled. What connected these texts other than that they were the authors’ firsts?

The class and I chewed on that question for many weeks. What we finally arrived at felt insufficient but ultimately satisfied: Those first books were each an author’s way of laying down a marker, announcing themselves, declaring: *I’m here*.

I thought of that seminar as I paged through Michael O’Connell’s *Startling Figures: Encounters With American Catholic Fiction*, which gathers analyses of Flannery O’Connor, J. F. Powers, Walker Percy, Tim Gautreaux, George Saunders and Alice McDermott, along with capsule takes in the introduction and epilogue of Tobias Wolff, Ron Hansen, Andre Dubus, Phil Klay and Kirstin Valdez

Quade. It’s hard—though fun—to imagine them sitting around the same table, let alone sharing the pages of a single slim volume.

O’Connell recognizes that. In an endnote, he mentions that “one of the challenges in writing this book was deciding which authors to include.” He holds that:

O’Connor, Percy, and Powers best represent the American Catholic tradition in their given time period, but outside of these three, it would be possible to choose an entirely different set of American writers...including, say, Cormac McCarthy, Annie Dillard, and Toni Morrison.

Morrison’s absence seems the biggest in O’Connell’s book, but then, she deserves a spiritually lensed book of her own (and has one, thanks to the 2022 book by **America** contributor Nadra Nittle, *Toni Morrison’s Spiritual Vision: Faith, Folktales, and Feminism in Her Life and Literature*).

More curious to me than who made the cut, though, was the lodestar O’Connell chose for his study: violence, which he says Catholic writers often “employ...to shape their readers’ experience of the text.” It is “remarkable,” he continues, “how often characters in Catholic literature suffer, in upsetting, shocking, disorienting ways.” He cites O’Connor on the subject: “I have found,” she writes in *Mystery and Manners*, “that violence is strangely capable of returning my characters to reality and preparing them to accept their moment of grace.”

Not surprisingly, O’Connor is the first author O’Connell examines at length in this book, subjecting both the classic short story “A Good Man Is Hard to Find” and the still-strange 1952 novel *Wise Blood* to smart, thorough readings.

“A Good Man Is Hard to Find,” the story of a family car trip interrupted by a prison escapee known as the Misfit, is particularly useful to O’Connell. How could it not be? After shooting the grandmother, the Misfit famously intones that she “would’ve been a good woman, if it had been somebody there to shoot her every minute of her life.” O’Connell suggests that the Misfit (who is white), is:

representative of a segment of society that was more or less created by the exclusionary practices of the White elite and has now turned violent. In this story, we see that the patriarchal system, built on the violence and oppression of slavery, leads to the production of violent figures like the Misfit, who in turn contribute to the further disruption of order in the modern world.



In this chapter, O’Connell also begins to move his argument past whether violence is a defining characteristic of American Catholic fiction—it is, it is, it is, this book seems to say—to the more interesting, if elusive, question of why. In O’Connor’s case, “violence...is her attempt to shock her audience into seeing reality anew.” The word *askew* might better finish that sentence, but no matter; O’Connell’s larger point is that she “does not simply want to capture her reader’s attention, [but] wants to lead them toward the same kind of radical conversion her characters undergo.”

Though very much in keeping with O’Connor’s other writings, this is a bold point, and a good point for amenable readers to stop and search their own souls: Has O’Connor ever led them to conversion? Has any literature? Engagingly, O’Connell charts his own (what I would call a) conversion experience, digressing to talk about encountering this short story for the first time in college, being “baffled” by it, and retreating to the upper reaches of the Hesburgh Library at Notre Dame, where he spent hours “puzzling over her stories, her letters, her essays, trying to put it all together.” That he chose further study over chucking the book across the room seems evidence of a powerful conversion indeed.

Startling Figures itself may convert lay readers to academic books. It’s readable, relatable and lively. Little theory is summoned; focused, accessible close readings do most of the work. I found myself eagerly making margin notes and underlining passages early in the book, though less so later. It’s not that the analyses of post-O’Connor authors were less keen, but that the argument about violence’s centrality seemed to have been largely settled by the time I reached those pages.

That doesn’t mean I wasn’t still surprised to see violence crop up in a discussion of the mild and mirthful J. F. Powers—though O’Connell did remind me that the title character of Powers’s National Book Award-winning novel, *Morte d’Urban*, is felled by a painful golf ball to the skull. And Alice McDermott: Surely there’s no violence there? But yes, *The Ninth Hour*, her “most explicitly Catholic book,” opens in the aftermath of a suicide.

That said, I wondered if violence played as catalytic a role in McDermott and some of the later texts discussed. In McDermott and Saunders, violence is present but seems less of an axis; in McDermott’s work in particular—and here’s to a dozen more books shining a light on this greatest of contemporary authors, Catholic and not—I feel more struck by the exemplars of “the goodness and loving kindness of God,” as Titus 3:4 would have it. McDermott’s characters are often broken, but also resilient, especially

More curious was the lodestar O’Connell chose for his study: violence.

in the face of violence.

So, too, in the work of George Saunders. Saunders initially seems the odd man out, but O’Connell makes a compelling case, backed up by material found in another book, *Conversations With George Saunders*, which O’Connell edited. He quotes from it frequently and trenchantly: “Once a person has a glimpse of mystery,” O’Connell reports Saunders saying, “he’s always going to be seeking that.”

Ultimately, what stirred me most was O’Connell’s declaration in his closing pages that he does “not find questions about the viability or ongoing existence of the Catholic novel to be particularly compelling (the Catholic novel, like the novel in general, will continue to exist in one form or another even as critics and readers continue to forecast its death),” but rather that he is “interested in the way the Catholic novel continues to evolve and change to reflect the contemporary moment.”

To be clear, I forecast life, not death. And to echo that first novels class I taught, I detect a similar assertion among the Catholic writers gathered here: *We’re here. And: to stay.* That may not be startling, but the assessment of that claim by this generous, capacious book ceaselessly is.

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SUFFERING AND ENRICHMENT



Doubleday / 318p \$28

Doctor's appointments can feel rushed and impersonal, with the clinician failing to make eye contact as they type the patient's symptoms into a computer. What difference could be made in the quality of care and overall medical knowledge if doctors instead sought to listen to the patient's entire story? This is the idea behind narrative medicine, a field that Rita Charon helped establish three decades ago, implementing a curriculum at Columbia University and publishing books on the subject. The practice of narrative medicine has spread, even though its humanist approach is at odds with the bottom-line ethos of corporatized medicine.

In Megan Nix's thoughtful and moving debut *Remedies for Sorrow*, she reflects on the doctors who took the time to listen to her entire story as she sought answers about her daughter's disabilities, in contrast to those who seemed rushed, incurious or too egotistical to accept that there were ailments they knew little about. "Narrative *is* prevention," Nix writes.

Nix's book is ostensibly a memoir, but confining *Remedies for Sorrow* to one genre seems too restrictive for what this expansive and enlightening book accomplishes. It tells the story of Nix and her family, yes, but it also delves into the medical literature to construct a history of congenital CMV (cytomegalovirus), a little-known and astonishingly

prevalent virus that causes birth defects. She roves into theology and philosophy, gathering insights from Thomas Merton, Thomas Aquinas, Susan Sontag, C. S. Lewis and Patricia Hampl, to name a few thinkers whose wisdom Nix cites and reflects on.

The book could be classified as journalism for the way Nix spends time with families whose children have been disabled or died from CMV and conveys these lives in all their particular suffering and grace. It is also a work of advocacy, as Nix informs people about CMV and pushes legislators to enact laws that could enable its prevention and detection. And it is a testament of faith, as Nix synthesizes all these threads into a beautiful meditation on what it means to live in a world where suffering befalls the most innocent.

As *Remedies for Sorrow* opens, Nix gives birth to Anna, her second child, who is born silent and with a low birth weight for her gestational age. Anna fails her hearing test, and the doctors tell Nix not to worry, but she senses something is wrong. "There's something different, even foreign, about this child," Nix writes, "like she might contain something that isn't quite ours." At first, Nix is reluctant to press for answers. "I respect doctors, I tend to be obedient to authority, and I didn't yet think of motherhood as an authority of its own," she writes.

After Anna fails another hearing test when she is a few weeks old, Nix finds a doctor who suggests they test her for congenital CMV. At this point Nix, like surely many readers of the book, has never heard of CMV. When Anna tests positive for it, Nix begins to learn everything she can. "CMV is a common virus that stays in your system forever, like chicken pox," a doctor explains. "If you caught it when you were pregnant, it wouldn't harm you. But if it crosses the placenta, it can pose serious challenges for a fetus because they're in the midst of development."

While doctors routinely inform pregnant women about the risks of other uncommon causes of birth defects, according to one source Nix cites, 91 percent of American women have never heard of CMV. This is shocking, given that, "around 40,000 American babies are born each year with CMV, of whom 6,000 to 8,000 will end up with life-long disabilities. Children disabled by congenital CMV outnumber children disabled here by any other congenital condition or disease, including Down syndrome, spina bifida, cystic fibrosis, and pediatric HIV."

Children born with CMV can experience a number of problems, from hearing loss to blindness to early death. Some calamities can be averted by quick detection and treatment. There's so little awareness of CMV, and so little testing done for it, however, that many people never learn that CMV is the likely cause of their child's disabilities. CMV is a virus, so its spread can be mitigated by the various

virus-avoidance methods we've all learned since the pandemic, from hand washing to mask-wearing to refraining from eating your sick toddler's leftovers.

However, as Nix discovers, CMV is "a condition the medical world has contested disclosing to pregnant women for the last seventy-some years." Why would doctors withhold this crucial information from patients? Nix tries to get to the root of this. Are doctors afraid women will neglect their toddlers if they learn these germ-prone kids are one of the primary risks for passing CMV to the fetus? Do they think women can't handle the truth? Or does the medical system lack the resources for testing and care that reducing the rate and severity of CMV in America would require? The answer seems to be all of the above. "The truth I'm after is proof that women can handle the facts—no matter how inconvenient, no matter how complex," Nix writes.

Alongside the medical mystery Nix pursues, she places her own spiritual journey. Nix was raised Roman Catholic, and her brother David is a traveling priest who goes by "Padre Peregrino." David encouraged Nix to visit a Byzantine church in Denver, and while there, Nix reflects, "Something here felt authentic, ancient, laid bare." A striking man named Luke was singing in the choir that day. He introduced himself at a potluck, and the rest is history. Nix married Luke, an easygoing man who spends summers in Alaska fishing nonstop, earning enough to support the family for the rest of the year.

Remedies for Sorrow was titled after five activities St. Thomas Aquinas detailed in his *Summa Theologica* to help people overcome the blues. Nix divides her book into sections named after Aquinas's theses: weeping, contemplation, company, pleasure and caretaking. When Nix reaches an impasse in seeking answers and assistance from the medical and scientific community, she turns toward her faith:

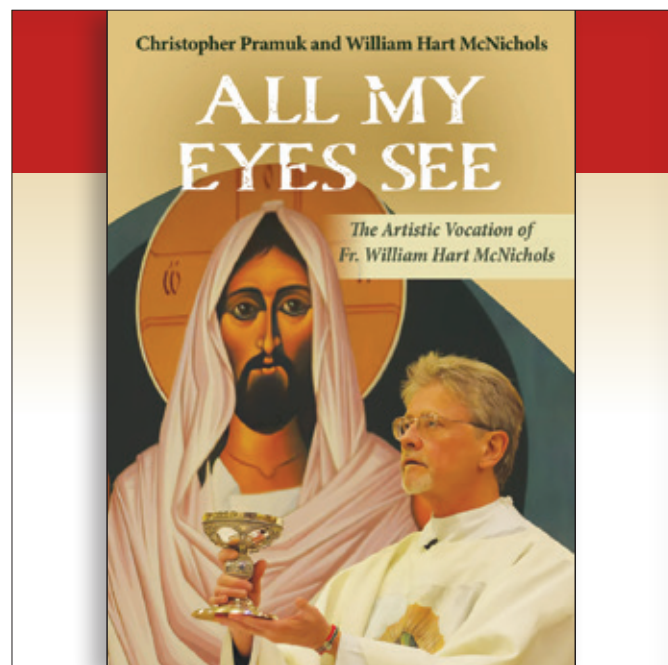
Though my prenatal care providers hadn't prepared me for the ubiquitousness of illness, my religion should have. In scripture, God is referred to constantly as a healer; in Orthodoxy, as the Great Physician. Meaning, then, that we are all vectors of sickness, whether inherent or acquired, physical or mental. According to Orthodox teaching, this does not mean we are culpable or less worthy of love; it means we need more than ourselves. This I feel sharply after Anna's birth.

Perhaps the most rewarding part of this many-faceted book is the way it reveals insights gleaned from a close relationship with a person the world classifies as disabled. "I have never had a love," Nix writes about Anna, "so complex,

so vigilant, so full of mystery." Nix brings us into the living room of a mother whose child died young from complications of CMV and allows us to witness the beauty of this mother's remembrances and her gratitude for her child's brief life. Nix takes us to a school for deaf children that was designed by a deaf architect, with all kinds of features that center their experience, such as floors with "a bouncy give to them so that someone who can't hear can feel another person approaching from behind."

In reflecting on her journey during Anna's early years, Nix writes, "I am tired, older-feeling than I am. But I also feel like I was only half-awake before having Anna. I am a different kind of mother now, more wounded, more resilient. Because of Anna, I am more than I have ever been." Through this gorgeous, eloquent book, Nix demonstrates how loss and suffering, while never sought, can provide profound enrichment, spark gratitude and enhance the meaning of the life that remains to be lived.

Jenny Shank's story collection *Mixed Company* won the Colorado Book Award, and her novel *The Ringer* won the High Plains Book Award. She teaches in the Mile High MFA program at Regis University in Denver.



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—JAMES MARTIN, SJ, author, *Learning to Pray*

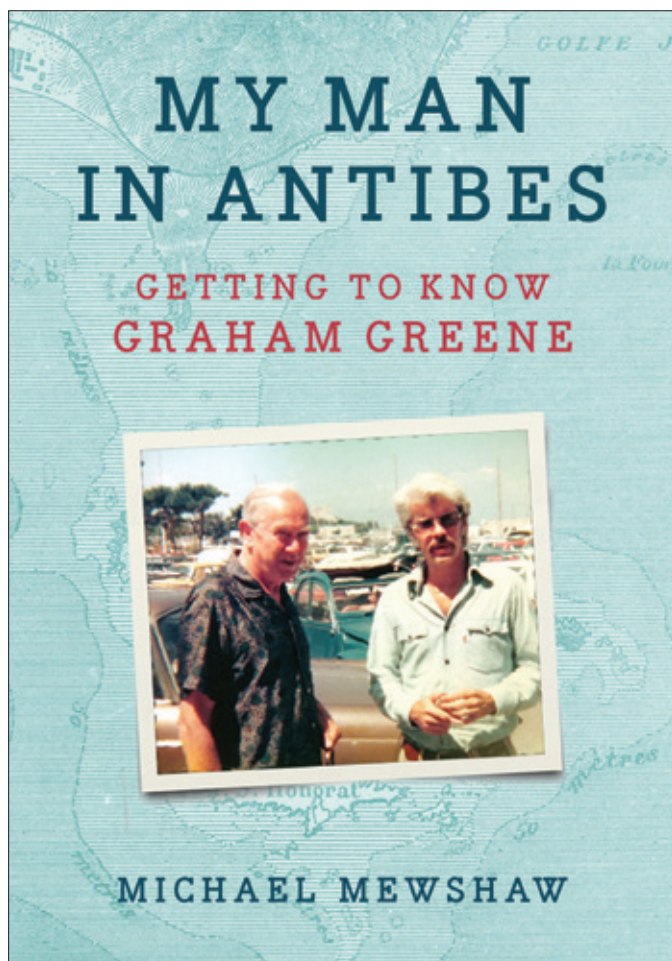
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A LITERARY PURSUIT



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Michael Mewshaw's *My Man in Antibes* is an entertaining, moving memoir, spiced with intriguing literary anecdotes about his sometimes fraught friendship with Graham Greene. (It seems anyone who knew Greene had a fraught relationship with him.) It calls to mind two other books about Greene: *The Man Within My Head*, by Pico Iyer, and *Greene on Capri: A Memoir*, by Shirley Hazzard.

Mewshaw, whom the longtime NPR book commentator Alan Cheuse once called “the best novelist in America nobody knows,” mentions both of these books in his memoir. In writing about Iyer's book, Mewshaw prefaces his remarks with a story of how he and his wife, Linda, honeymooned in Haiti because they had just read Greene's *The Comedians*. Then he comments:

If following in Graham Greene's footsteps sounds foolish, I'll plead in self-defense that I had plenty of company. For decades, readers and religious zealots, defrocked priests, respected scholars, and

admiring fellow authors had formed a procession behind Greene, like penitents on the Via Dolorosa.

In the same way, Mewshaw writes, Iyer, in *The Man Within My Head*, a play on the title of Greene's first novel, “portrays Greene, whom Iyer had never met, as an uncanny mirror of his own past and a figure of prophesy for his future.”

Iyer's book is a literary exploration of what Iyer has thought about Greene and his work, whereas Shirley Hazzard actually knew him during the summers Greene spent on Capri. She also mentions that “several of Graham's friends from early years had gone through troubled relations with him—Graham not disliking his disruptive role. In most of his long associations, there were, I imagine, periods when his friends felt themselves heartily disliked.”

Hazzard wrote better than she knew. Mewshaw says that Greene did not always like having Hazzard around. “He told me,” Mewshaw writes, “that he found Hazzard's pressure to socialize and trade intellectual gossip tiresome and oppressive. He lamented that she had almost ruined the island for him.”

Graham Greene, then, was a cantankerous and mirror-like man. All of these people following him on the Via Dolorosa, he trying to get away from them, ducking into brothels and bars along the way.

But why did they follow him? Because he was a great writer and an English Catholic convert who wrote about belief, doubt and betrayal. Having formed his artistic vision as the son of a headmaster in an English school, he never knew exactly where he stood with the other children or with his father. Whom should he be loyal to? Whom should he betray? All of which Greene describes in his first volume of autobiography, *A Sort of Life*.

Mewshaw had his own, more violent troubles growing up in Maryland in a poor Catholic family. Domestic and neighborhood violence marred his childhood, but he managed to claw his way out through his Catholic education. He then moved on to the University of Maryland and the University of Virginia, where he completed a doctorate in creative writing. From then on Mewshaw lived as a professor and writer who taught for many years in Texas but lived in Europe, mostly in Italy and France, in the summers.

Mewshaw had always admired Greene's writing and, after badgering a priest who corresponded with Greene, got Greene's address and wrote him a fan letter. He was so enamored of the author that, instead of accepting a Wallace Stegner Fellowship, which most writers would have died for, Mewshaw and his wife moved back to France in hopes of meeting Greene.

After receiving a brush-off first letter, Mewshaw tried again and, to his astonishment, Greene invited him and his wife over. Mewshaw's description of their first meeting is memorable:

He [Greene] was then sixty-eight and a world historical figure. I was twenty-nine, and my initial impression was of a very old man, fragile, stoop-shouldered, with oysterish blue eyes that avoided mine. He was six foot two, an inch taller than I am, but appeared spindly beneath loose-fitting trousers and an untucked floral shirt. The Italian writer Mario Soldati, a friend of Greene's, described him as having 'a hurt, offended face, metaphorically bruised by events.' Still, he retained an aura—or was this just my jangled nerves?—that made him imposing.

A cocktail or two relaxed everybody, and soon Greene was regaling the young couple with stories of meeting Ho Chi Minh in Vietnam—he'd had to fortify himself with "a few pipes of opium"—and his personal life with his mistress, Yvonne Cloetta. The two had met in Cameroon after Greene finished researching his novel, *A Burnt-Out Case*, in the Congo.

Greene surprised Mewshaw on their next meeting when he invited them to eat out at a restaurant, but could not himself drive a car. The world traveler who couldn't drive a car! Many more contradictions followed, as Mewshaw learned of the ups and downs of friendship with Greene. After Mewshaw finally published a profile of Greene in *The London Magazine*, Greene exploded at him in a letter that, at least from Mewshaw's point of view, rocked their friendship.

The passage of time smooths things over, but another strange thing happened as a result of Mewshaw's profile. (This is where the juicy literary anecdotes come in.) A profile of Greene appeared in *The New Yorker* titled "The Dangerous Edge," written by Penelope Gilliatt, the *New Yorker* film critic. As Mewshaw describes it, it "had [my] fingerprints all over it."

When Mewshaw contacted the editor, Wallace Shawn, the latter offered him \$2,000 to keep quiet about the situation. Gilliatt was in emotional distress, he said, and might kill herself if news leaked out. Later, Mewshaw read in Lillian Ross's memoir (Ross was Shawn's mistress) that this was the same reason Shawn gave her for not leaving his wife, who also would have killed herself. (Mewshaw also tells a couple of hilarious stories about the writer Anthony Burgess, whom Greene detested.)

Eventually Mewshaw settled back in the United States and found himself in a severe depression, rather like William Styron, whom he had known during his time at University of Virginia. But Mewshaw found that therapy and Prozac helped him out of it. He took advantage of these even though Greene had said he himself would never do so: "Cure the disease [and] I doubt a writer would remain." Mewshaw risked it and didn't publish a book for 10 years, but he produced a lot of freelance work.

There is not much about Catholicism *per se* in the book. As Mewshaw puts it, "His [Greene's] faith—how he felt about it, how he did or didn't practice it—seemed to me a deeply private matter. I wouldn't have challenged him any more than I would have quizzed him about his sex life."

Mewshaw does discuss what is known of Greene's relationship with Kim Philby, the British spy who worked for the Soviets, and doesn't deny Greene said some reprehensible things in his defense. But he also, fittingly, says of Greene, "Wherever human lives, religious belief, or political freedom was at risk, Greene had traveled there to record the plight of the victims and reckon the body count."

Franklin Freeman, a frequent contributor to *America*, lives in Maine.



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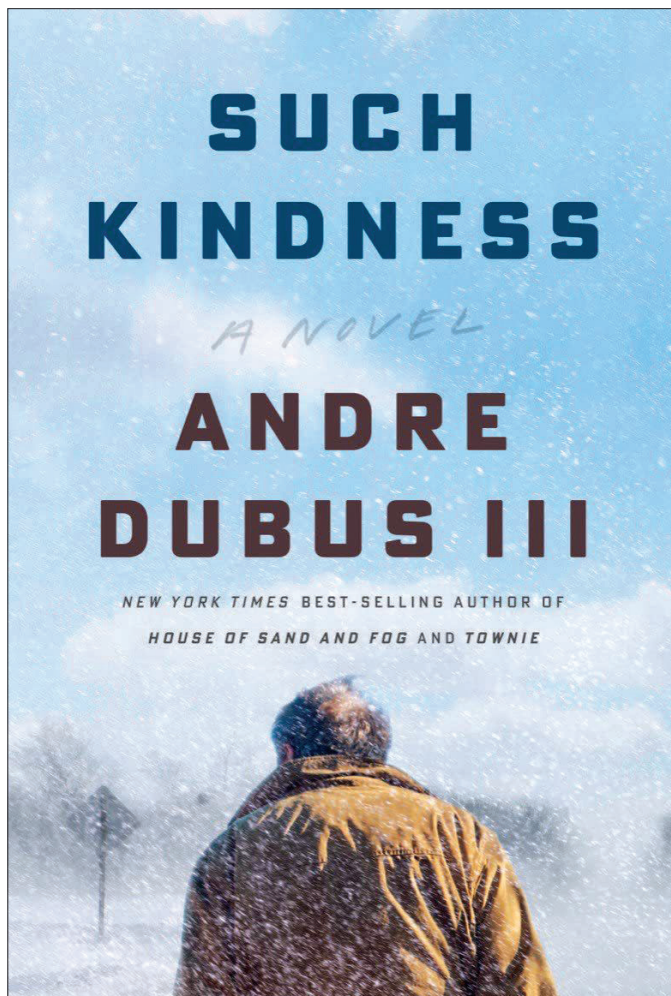


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A HOUSE OF SAND



W. W. Norton & Company / 336p \$30

In his latest novel, *Such Kindness*, Andre Dubus III depicts protagonist Tom Lowe Jr., struggling after nearly a decade to accept his station as a “first-world-poor” man living with a disability in subsidized housing in Amesbury, Mass. The story is a powerful one full of sorrow and hope—less about physical recovery than psychological journey—a *Siddhartha*-like “search for who he was meant to be,” either a good man or a thief.

This is Dubus’s best novel since *House of Sand and Fog* (1999), which sold so well that he could afford to build a house for his family in Massachusetts, much like his fictional protagonist, but with much less heartache and body ache, I hope. Dubus knows poverty. His father, the writer Andre Dubus, made \$7,000 a year teaching while supporting a wife and four kids. When the younger Andre’s parents divorced, his father’s income had to pay for another apartment, another car and child support. “We went,” Dubus says, “from First World poor to First World poorer.”

Since then, Dubus has written about the middle- and

lower-middle classes in his acclaimed memoir *Townie* (2011) and in his novels *Gone So Long* (2018) and *The Garden of Last Days* (2008). Dubus’s past portrayals of middle-class folk are both realistic and precise. His dialogue has been mostly true and believable except for some stereotypical English-Arabic in *Garden*. In *Such Kindness*, not only are the characters convincing, their dialogue and the voice of the first-person narrator is believable; and Tom, though an imperfect hero, is likable.

When we are introduced to Tom, we find he is a builder and a carpenter who fell from the roof while building his family’s house and fractured his hips and pelvis. Tom read Hermann Hesse’s *Siddhartha* as a teenager and thought it described his own life. Instead of Hesse’s growing up “in the shade of the fig tree,” Tom thinks, “in the shade of the dead-end street is where Tom Lowe Jr. grew up.”

Dubus weaves religious and metaphysical imagery into his story, as he did in *Garden*, but this time the imagery is solely Christian. Describing Tom’s accident, he writes:

That church spire towering over those trees behind me that afternoon, it felt like some reminder to me that this life of ours is suffused with mystery, and who’s to say that I’m not supposed to learn something important from this latest challenge?...

But *who’s to say?* That phrase a feather in my head as my own body seemed to unmoor from its very center, and then the air itself shifted and I was somehow rushing through that air, my hands lurching for the soffit and the blue beyond as if they could possibly save me.

Dubus puts Tom in a dangerous position—and I don’t mean just standing on a roof without a harness. It has been about 10 years since Tom’s fall, and other things fell apart, too. Tom had jumped on a good deal for the land his home was built on at only \$90,000, but he borrowed more than he should have and neglected to look into the finer points of an adjustable-rate mortgage. When its long arm kicked in, the monthly mortgage payments nearly doubled and strangled him. His injury prevented him from working and, when he couldn’t pay the premiums, he lost his health insurance. He became addicted to opioids, which he calls “O’s,” to manage the pain in his hips. His medical bills grew along with loan payments, and he lost the family home.

If all that weren’t bad enough, Tom’s wife Ronnie (Veronica) divorced him, and his son Drew hates his father because of Tom’s baggies of Os. But that is all backstory that Dubus deftly reveals throughout the novel.

Although Dubus piles a lot of hardship on Tom, he



Although Dubus piles a lot of hardship on Tom, he manages to avoid over-sentimentality.

manages to avoid over-sentimentality. The story, told in the present tense, begins as Tom, his neighbor Trina and her friend Jamie make their getaway with the trash from the home of the banker who issued Tom the adjustable-rate mortgage. Though Tom soon regrets it, it was his idea to harvest credit card convenience checks from people's trash to make some money. This time, they find nothing of any value.

Tom has worked since he was 16. But now, broken physically and emotionally, he is unable to hold a job because of his disability. His hips burn with pain, and even though he has kicked his drug habit, he drinks cheap vodka as a "pain distracter" to endure the burning. He has tried working other jobs: a sitting job as an Uber driver that he could physically tolerate for only about three weeks, and a standing job as a cashier at a store about 200 yards from where he lives, "the 8" (Section 8 subsidized housing). There, Tom has a menagerie of neighbors about whom he laments: "For the thousandth time I think that I do not belong here. I do not belong here with any of these people."

These people include Trina, 27, a jobless, single mother of three who sells her plasma every week to help pay the rent. Although she yells and swears at her kids "all day and night," she and Tom are friends and he spends more time with her than he does with any of his other neighbors. Amber and Cal live across from Trina's unit. He is Black and she is white, and their three kids are all under the age of six. "Those kids," Tom says, "are always dressed in clean clothes, their hair and faces washed, two boys and a girl their mother doesn't let play with Trina's kids, who are not clean and who do not wear clean clothes."

Then there is good Mrs. Bongiovanni, "close to a hundred," about whom Tom wonders "if she's from the old country and not this 'new' one that throws away its old and its broken and even those barely getting started." Fitz, the evil neighbor, makes pornography and steals and sells drugs. He buys Tom's food assistance cards for 75 percent of their value. It's what Tom resorts to so that he "can buy the liquid pain distracter that keeps me from falling back

to the Os." After Fitz's cut, Tom has only \$100.38 for food for the month.

Dubus makes the money situation even worse for Tom, who wants to buy his son something for his birthday. But Tom faces fines amounting to \$1,600 over a traffic incident, plus car-impound charges that keep growing. As the child's birthday gets nearer, Tom plans to sell his prized tools to raise some money to pay the fines and get his car out of storage, but someone steals the tools.

You would think the hardships and the sorrows couldn't get worse for Tom, but Dubus continues to twist the knife as the story unfolds. As Tom makes his trek to visit his son, he gets plenty of kindness from strangers. But Dubus thrusts Tom into the fraud scheme again. I won't spoil the ending—but Tom gleans some hard-learned philosophies of life, and considers reading *Siddhartha* again for its wisdom.

Readers may find similar wisdom within grasp if they read *Such Kindness*.

Joseph Peschel, a freelance writer and critic in South Dakota, can be reached through his blog at josephpeschel.com.



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A REFUSAL TO SURRENDER



Little, Brown / 416p \$29

You may have never heard about the Doughnut Dollies. A group of American women in the Red Cross who passed out doughnuts and coffee to soldiers on the front lines in the Second World War, much of their recorded history was lost when the building housing their archives burned down.

In *Good Night, Irene*, Luis Alberto Urrea painstakingly pieces this history back together from first-person accounts, scouring remaining records and personally traveling to every location mentioned to find answers. These accounts allow him to weave a vivid and heartfelt tapestry. The book becomes a love letter to his late mother, herself a Doughnut Dolly in World War II.

Urrea is a Mexican-American best-selling author who has won multiple awards for his poetry, fiction and essays, including being named a Guggenheim fellow and being a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize. *Good Night, Irene* is not his first time mining his family trauma to create a well-researched historical fiction novel. *The Hummingbird's Daughter* and *Queen of America* memorialize his great aunt, Teresita

Urrea, who was known as “The Saint of Cabora” and “The Mexican Joan of Arc.” And in *The House of Broken Angels*, he fictionalizes the death of his half-brother, who was raised in Mexico. Urrea grounds his stories in personal history, incorporating an authenticity that feels textured and lived in.

Good Night, Irene reconciles grief and tragedy by depicting a life in service of others. The only way the Doughnut Dollies learn to live in darkness is to become the light themselves. Urrea rewrites history to breathe healing into the tragedies his mother was never able to process fully.

Irene, the character based on Urrea’s mother, Phyllis Irene, joins the war as a young, naïve runaway. She sees the war as an adventure and a way to escape her abusive fiancé. Irene’s partner in the Red Cross, Dorothy, is a little more weathered and down to earth; she drives the giant Red Cross Clubmobile all over Europe while Irene daydreams and writes poetry in the back.

The friendship forged under fire between these two women is the beating heart of the book. They see each other in a way no one else does. While Irene may need Dorothy’s strength at the story’s beginning, in the end, Irene’s softness saves them.

The leaders of the Red Cross try to warn the pair: “You’ll be shocked. You’ll think you’re strong, you’ll think you’re tough, you’ll think you can take it, you cannot take it, and then you will not be shocked anymore. That’s what war does to you, so you can keep on going.” They are there to serve the men, remind them of their humanity, smile, flirt, and be the shining faces of home and what they are fighting for. It’s an old-fashioned idea, but there is something beautiful about making a space for joy and comfort in a war zone.

That said, this was not an era of working through feelings and processing trauma. Like the soldiers they served, the Dollies themselves were in survival mode. Rule number one was to never let the men see them cry. The Dollies were there to put on a happy face and smile through the pain.

The concept of the Dollies was more than a little insane. While men fought for their lives, these women came in their Clubmobiles and handed out little treats. But it is this very insanity that creates the magic of the book. In times of darkness, dread and death, the smallest spark of love and hope shines the brightest.

Throughout the harrowing events of the book, these bright young women become hardened by trauma. They visit a concentration camp, and all they can do is take pictures. Irene runs into a bombing, trying to help, but she is slapped in the face with the fact that there is nothing she can do. She’s not a nurse or a medic; she can only hold vic-

tims as they die. Later, when she is under fire herself, she hears women screaming as German soldiers forcibly take them. She cannot even muster the courage to pray for them, hiding in the hay; all she can pray is that she is not taken herself. Afterward, she's wracked with guilt, praying, "Bless me, Father, for I have sinned."

Dorothy is driven mad by the inaction that makes up such a significant part of every soldier's life. She joins a secret mission outside of the army to gun down Germans herself under the cover of night. But when she takes the life of a German soldier, she is surprised to find she is not soothed or invigorated by her vengeance. She feels cold and empty. She asks herself, "Had I sinned?"

The women do not feel the warmth of the light they are trying to ignite. They feel swallowed by the darkness that surrounds them. Near the end of the book, Dorothy finds a baby in a deceased mother's arms. In a moment of desperation, she takes it in as her own. This is not a woman longing to be a mother; this is a woman who cannot face another death. Irene doesn't understand: She thinks Dorothy is acting irrationally. How will they care for a child in the back of a Clubmobile? Dorothy implores Irene, "It can't be about killing, it must be about living." At that point, Irene trusts her friend as a partner and does what she says. It is a powerful act of rebellion—a refusal to surrender to circumstances.

Good Night, Irene reminds us why we must fight for life, light and goodness in a culture of death. These women may not have felt they made much of a difference, but as depicted by Urrea, we as readers can recognize them as the heroes they were.

Reading the end of the book on my flight home for Christmas, I found myself openly sobbing. Life is so precious, but it is easily taken for granted in times of peace. *Good Night, Irene* reminds us why life is worth fighting for.

Amanda Bergeman is a 2017 graduate of Loyola Marymount University's School of Film and Television. She recently finished a short film, "Periods, Puberty, and the Paranormal," with the Cleveland Camera Rental Incubator.

TRIDUUM: SUBSTANCE VS. ACCIDENTS

By Tristan Macdonald

At the Last Supper's Mass,
I see
a statue veiled in purple,
and I hear
my toddler call it a ghost,
but I hope
that from the other side of the veil,
my mom sees
the same Mass, with a maskless Host.

At the crucifixion's liturgy,
I see
the Tent of Meeting pierced and purged,
and I hear
the church's heart's hollowness bleed into the road,
but I know
it's the same embracing silence
my mom and I heard
pervade this parking lot on the same day years ago.

And at the vigil of us not-yet knocked-down guards,
I see
a cavern of lit candles, one towering above the rest,
and I hear
the renewal of baptismal covenants,
but I know
they're the same bracing promises
I heard my mom
renew as she received her final sacraments,

and my tears now
are the same my brother, *in persona Christi*, shed then,
and my love now
is the same my mom promised to give without end.

Tristan Macdonald is a teacher of theology, history and English at the secondary-school level. He lives in Massachusetts with his wife and two children.

Seeking God Through Lent in the Psalms

Because Easter is so early this year (March 31), the deepest part of Lent and all of Holy Week fall in the month of March. The last three Sundays of Lent this year feature passages from the Gospel of John. Each Johannine passage highlights a lesson or controversy that foreshadows Jesus' passion. On the Third Sunday of Lent, for example, the Gospel reading recounts Jesus' Passover visit to Jerusalem when he overturned the money changers' tables in the Temple (Jn 2:13-25). On what authority, ask the locals, does this man disturb our festival? Jesus' response is enigmatic, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up" (Jn 2:19). John's Gospel introduces the tension between destruction and restoration that foreshadows the paschal mystery.

The Sunday readings this month are rich in another way as well. Each week's responsorial psalm evokes a deep yearning for God that is often beyond our ability to express in plain language. This yearning is another way to

think about Lent, not simply to repent and believe in the Gospel, but to long for it. "By the rivers of Babylon," says the psalmist, "there we sat weeping when we remembered Zion" (Ps 137:1). Two of the most common genres of psalms are praise and lament. This psalm, a lament, reveals a longing to see Jerusalem. "Let my tongue be silent," yearns the speaker, "if I ever forget you!" (Ps 137:6). Palm Sunday will highlight this yearning as a deeply felt ache not for Zion, but for God: "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" (Ps 22:2). The psalm ends, however, with renewed hope that God did in fact hear the cry of "this poor wretch" (Ps 22:25).

A third theme in this month's readings is the significance of the holy city of Jerusalem. A place of deep contradictions, Jerusalem is the place exiles longed to be, the place where prophets met their destruction, the place where God's judgments are executed and where God's kingdom of mercy will begin. May the psalms for this season help guide us through this redemptive journey.

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT (B), MARCH 3, 2024

Psalm 19 – Torah as the Essence of Life

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT (B), MARCH 10, 2024

Psalm 137 – Zion as the Place of Life

FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT (B), MARCH 17, 2024

Psalm 51 – The Heart as the Center of Renewal

PALM SUNDAY OF THE LORD'S PASSION, MARCH 24, 2024

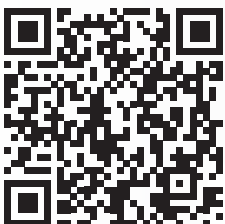
Psalm 22 – Longing for God

EASTER SUNDAY, THE RESURRECTION OF THE LORD, MARCH 31, 2024

Psalm 118 – God's Mercy as the Cause of One's Joy



Victor M. Cancino, S.J., lives on the Flathead Indian Reservation in western Montana and is the pastor in residence for St. Ignatius Mission. He studied Sacred Scripture at the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome.



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TREES

By Greg Kennedy

barter with us breath.
anchor heaven.
elevate Earth.
hold soil in hands
as eloquent as sign language poets.
transubstantiate particles
of sunlight.
welcome winged migrants
without papers, process, status.
cradled Jesus
in a shared embrace of pain,
having died with him
on a hill once thick with forest.
speak in scent.
text in fungi.
laugh in pollen
and seldom stray
from meditation.
wait and shade
and crack
when sorrow is too much to bear.
teach and feed
and wink
when wind tells jokes
through their tittering leaves.
are saints.
are martyrs.
are lightning rods
telling stories through scars
and rings
of exquisite calculus.
are mystics—
just look up
the word
in your fattest dictionary
and you'll find
its full meaning
printed on their flesh.

Greg Kennedy, S.J., is the executive director of the Ignatius Jesuit Centre in Guelph, Ontario. He is the author of *Reupholstered Psalms (Vols. 1-3)* and *Amazing Friendships Between Animals and Saints*.



GREECE & TURKEY



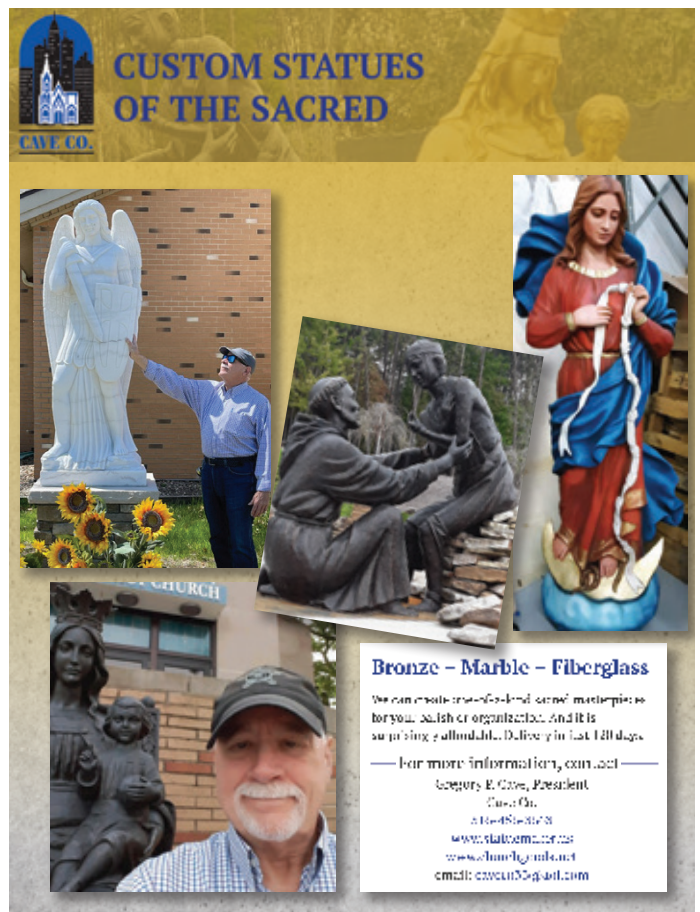
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Putting Down the Phone

Why I am taking up boredom during Lent

By Laura Loker



In his short story “Harrison Bergeron,” Kurt Vonnegut describes a future dystopia that takes extreme measures to make everyone equal in every way. The United States Handicapper General ensures that exceptionally beautiful people, for example, wear ugly masks. Strong people must wear heavy bags that limit their agility.

Perhaps most poignant to the modern reader: Intelligent people wear ear radios that blast sounds every 20 seconds to disrupt their thoughts. Vonnegut published the story in 1961, and reading it now makes you wonder whether we are all carrying our own Handicapper Generals in our back pockets.

Notifications, the pull to check social media or email: We are familiar with these, with their effects on productivity and “deep work,” on our mental health, on our public discourse. The movement against addictive technology—led at least in part by former Silicon Valley employees—is exploring these issues in earnest.

But there are other, weightier consequences. Our spiritual lives—which is to say, *our lives*—depend on some level of emptiness, a quiet receptivity, that most of us might be quick to label boredom. And what do we do when we’re bored? My hand twitches for my phone at the thought.

God has often worked in the quiet, the mundane. He spoke to Elijah not in the wind, the earthquake or the fire, but in a “light silent sound” (1 Kgs 19:12). Jesus became incarnate not as a military or political leader but as a baby of humble circumstances. Even the moment of his resurrection hap-

pened without earthly witnesses, as far as we know. Mary Magdalene found an empty tomb.

It is not a coincidence that God likes to wait for our stillness before he makes himself known. How else to show us that he loves us for who we are, not just what we do, that he is as gentle and patient as he is powerful?

But where our minds were once less occupied, and perhaps receptive to divine inspiration—waiting in line, let’s say—we now turn to our devices. I’ll be the first to admit it: I check my email at stoplights. *At stoplights!* Lord, have mercy.

Here’s the thing: God doesn’t email me. Sure, God speaks through other people, who may sometimes communicate with us by email. But that ache, that restlessness that drives me to my phone when there’s nothing else to distract me? It’s not going to be fixed by tending to my inbox, which generally gets about three times as many ads as it does messages from real people.

While I’m busy trying to soothe my existential discomfort, I’m actually missing out on communion with the king of the universe. I doubt I’m alone in this struggle (nearly all U.S. adults own smartphones). So, if you are still considering what to take up for Lent, may I propose more quiet and less technology use in the margins of your day?

We do have more margin than we may think. Even though our minds are often occupied with work, or thinking of loved ones, we also have needs that anchor us to the present. We have to cook and eat. We have to do dishes and fold clothes. We have to shower

and brush our teeth. During these moments, we can pray, not necessarily through rote words but simply by opening our minds and hearts to God, by choosing silence over distraction.

“What we dread as mindless activity can free us, mind and heart, for the workings of the Holy Spirit,” writes Kathleen Norris in her book *The Quotidian Mysteries*. “And repetitive motions are conducive to devotions such as the Jesus Prayer or the rosary. Anything is fair game for prayer.”

So it can be for any of us. I’ve probably prayed more over piles of laundry than I have in churches.

During Lent, we can begin to reflect: Do we open our hearts to God as we go about our days? Or are we voluntary participants in Vonnegut’s dystopia, disrupting every spiritual inclination with notifications and news feeds?

I’m still working out the particulars of checking my phone less often. Maybe I’ll try to keep it off my physical person more of the time. I’m expecting more boredom than immediate, obvious fruit, but perhaps fighting for boredom is a way to love God that is unique to our digital age.

“In our utilitarian culture, where we suffer from a collective compulsion to do something practical, helpful, or useful...contemplative prayer is a form of radical criticism,” writes Henri Nouwen. “It is not useful or practical. It is simply to waste time for and with God.”

Laura Loker is a writer in the Washington, D.C., area.



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MARCH 21 & 22, 2024

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Deanna Witkowski, author of Williams' biography, *Mary Lou Williams: Music for the Soul*, is the foremost interpreter of Williams, both musically (herself a virtuoso pianist), and as a scholar.

LECTURE

**March 21,
4:00–5:30 PM CDT**

4th Floor, Information Commons,
Loyola University Chicago,
Lake Shore Campus

LIVE PERFORMANCE

**March 22,
7:00–8:30 PM CDT**

Rosary Chapel, St Joseph's Hall,
Loyola University Chicago,
Lake Shore Campus



This event is free
and all are
welcome

This event is free and open
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LECTURE

**April 11
7:00–8:30 PM CDT**

McCormick Lounge,
Coffee Hall,
Loyola University Chicago,
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APRIL 11, 2024

ANNUAL CARDINAL BERNARDIN LECTURE

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This year's Bernardin Lecturer is Cardinal Christophe Pierre, Apostolic Nuncio to the United States. Cardinal Pierre's lecture will focus on the broad themes of diplomacy and reconciliation in both ecclesial and public settings.



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