

America



MARCH 16, 2020

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A Pontifical Education in Dialogue

Matt Malone, S.J., is traveling.

Less than three months after Pope Francis was elected, he held an audience at the Vatican with 9,000 students, parents, teachers and alums from Jesuit schools in Italy and Albania. The pope was set to speak on the theme of Jesuit education, and his audience had gathered, as per papal protocol, to listen respectfully.

“I prepared this address for you,” the pope began, “but it is five pages long! Somewhat boring. Let’s do something else.” Applause erupted.

“I will briefly summarize it,” he continued, “and then it will be possible for a few of you to ask a question and we can have a little dialogue. Do we like this idea or not?”

Another assenting applause filled the hall. The event organizers were taken aback and understandably apprehensive about what to do. Off stage, they quietly rallied some of the students as the pope spent the next five minutes summarizing the main points of his text. When he finished, he opened the floor to any questions the students and teachers might have. “I’m ready,” he said disarmingly.

The next 30 minutes witnessed a truly genuine and lively back-and-forth between students of various ages, educators and Francis. One student acknowledged his doubts about faith and asked the pope to offer some advice. Another student asked why he had renounced the luxuries of the papacy, opting instead to live in the Vatican guesthouse, drive a small car and even take the bus. One bold, young girl asked him directly if he even wanted to be pope! The audience burst into laughter.

March 13, 2020, marks the sev-

enth anniversary of the election of Pope Francis. With his election came a sudden and dramatic shift in access to the pope, and a flood of endearing and illuminating encounters like the one experienced by those young students.

Early on, everyone was awestruck, especially Catholics. Vatican commentators chalked it up to the pope’s simpler style and spontaneous personality. Some Catholics were fearful that such openness and unpredictability exposed the papacy to irreparable damage.

What became clear over these past seven years is Francis’ unrelenting commitment to creating opportunities for open and mutual encounters between him and others. The notion of Francis setting aside his prepared text in order to initiate a dialogue with an audience was novel in 2013. Today it is almost to be expected.

It would be a mistake, however, to think that Francis creates these opportunities spontaneously. Some Catholics may think him mad, but there is a method in his madness. Paradoxically, by facilitating these highly intentional encounters Francis ensures the conditions for a truly open and free exchange of ideas and opinions. Becoming a church that is mature enough to engage in authentic dialogue—that is the goal.

To pursue that goal effectively, Francis knows he cannot merely facilitate opportunities for dialogue. The church, the bishops, individual Catholics and even the pope must learn how to dialogue. Francis, aware of his responsibility to lead by example, engages in the dialogues he facilitates.

About six weeks after that audience with the young students, Francis visited Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, to celebrate

World Youth Day. It was a massive media event, Francis’ first international trip as pope. The journalists accompanying him were eager to debrief aboard the plane back to Rome. They prepared questions to submit, as per papal protocol. Francis refused to see the questions in advance. Instead, he engaged with the journalists and made it clear that everyone was free to ask any question. A veteran Vatican journalist who was on the plane later divulged, “We were sitting there, really and truly, with our mouths hanging open.”

What will blossom from these dialogues is uncertain when they begin. On that historic flight, when asked about an alleged gay lobby in the Vatican, Francis uttered his most famous unscripted remark to date, asking, “If someone is gay and is searching for the Lord and has good will, then who am I to judge him?” That statement liberated and consoled countless individuals; it provoked consternation and outrage in others. A space for dialogue was opened.

From the beginning of his pontificate, Francis has methodically offered the church an education in facilitating and participating in authentic dialogue. Engaging in such dialogue may not change the beliefs or opinions of a person. But it may change the person. A wall of suspicion may begin to crumble. A lighthearted moment may quell anxiety. A point of commonality may emerge. Seven years into this pontificate, Catholics may ask themselves, how have they tried to facilitate and participate in authentic dialogue, without fear, in search of the truth?

Sebastian Gomes, executive editor of audio and video.



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CNS photo/Paul Haring

People wearing masks for protection from the coronavirus during a tour of the Vatican on Feb. 29.

Cover: The Clementinum library in Prague
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All girls have a right to education

When was your last religious conversation?

A 2019 Gallup survey showed that as few as 4 percent of Americans had a conversation about religion with their family and friends in the prior week. **America** wanted to hear stories about the last time our readers had a religious conversation. We asked: “Who was it with? When was it? As much as you can share, what was it about?”

My last conversation about religion was two days ago, with an evangelical friend over beers at Wooden Cask Brewery in Newport, Ky. Ostensibly, the impetus for our discussion was the pastor and author Rob Bell and the notion of universal salvation. As we drained our brews, however, the dialogue evolved to encompass our comparative thoughts as Catholic and Protestant on orthodoxy, reconciling spiritual with practical life and God’s holiness as a defining feature of his relationship to humanity.

Chris Kuennen

Yellow Springs, Ohio

In the past two weeks I’ve answered questions about death from my mom, who has Alzheimer’s. While I am Catholic, my mom does not associate herself with any religion, although she was the one who helped me study catechism while enrolled at a local Catholic elementary school. She (more than my dad, who was Catholic) attended all the pertinent and important sacrificial rites of childhood. Mom is now faced with her mortality and had asked me questions about what will happen to her when she dies. I desperately want my mom to be at peace because she has not had a very peaceful life. So I told her she had nothing to fear, that I know she will go straight to heaven and be greeted by her loved ones and friends that have passed before her. She cried and wanted to know how I was so sure. I told her because she’s a good person who has lived a good life and has been generous. She cried throughout, asking questions and listening to me. I hope that she absorbed some of the serenity and peacefulness that I’ve prayed for her to have in these last weeks and months.

Karen Kilmer

Enumclaw, Wash.

A week or so ago, I discussed with my brother about the continuing revelations of the scandals involving predatory priests. We both had the same concern. When will this end? The foundation of our church is gravely damaged.

James Huse

Arlington, Va.

This past weekend we described to our children and grandchildren that we stayed in a Muslim neighborhood during our recent visit to Jerusalem and the Holy Land. The call to prayer several times a day was strikingly loud. Yet we were heartened by watching people pray, and it reminded us to pray too. We were treated with kindness by people of all faiths. We were fed delicious food and even invited by [a man named] Moses to his home for dinner. I was cursed by one beggar and blessed and kissed on both cheeks by another. I wasn’t sure what my kids and grandkids would think, but they were fascinated that our Jewish tour guides carried Hebrew New Testaments and had us read the Gospel readings associated with the places we were visiting. I think my kids were curious that we were respectful of the religious practices of other faiths.

Mary Straetmans

Atlanta, Ga.

I asked two coworkers to go to their corners during a conversation that was within earshot of customers. One is agnostic, the other evangelical. A third coworker had brought up the difference between deist and theist, which ignited their debate.

Timothy Siragusa

Omaha, Neb.

[My most recent religious conversation was with] my son-in-law and daughter. We compared the Muslim faith to my Catholic faith and discussed fasting. My 6-year-old granddaughter tells me about Allah.

Laurel Freeborg

Portland, Ore.

My last conversation about religion was with a colleague at work. It was about God’s presence and action in our lives and how to discern who God is calling us to be and what God is asking us to do.

Mary Ellen Mahon

Manchester, N.H.

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America

In El Salvador, Justice Delayed—Again?

Pope Francis last month recognized the martyrdom of Rutilio Grande García, S.J., and two of his lay companions, which may lead to their beatification later this year. Their deaths in 1977 preceded the more than 75,000 who died in El Salvador's 12-year civil war, from 1980 to 1992. In 1989, six Jesuits, their housekeeper and her daughter were murdered at the University of Central America in El Salvador.

The State Department is barring U.S. entry to 13 former Salvadoran military personnel identified as among those responsible for those 1989 killings. In 1993 a United Nations-mandated truth commission connected the men to the U.C.A. slayings and other human rights abuses that were the gory hallmark of El Salvador's long civil war. The conflict's brutality arguably culminated in the killings at the university, an appalling act that broke support for continuing military aid in the U.S. Congress, drawing El Salvador's combatants into negotiations that finally led to peace in 1992.

The State Department sanction is a symbolic step toward justice long denied. The move raised some hope in El Salvador that the perpetrators of the Jesuit murders and more of the era's

worst offenses would finally have to face survivors and family members of their victims in court. Unfortunately, even such small expectations for justice are already imperiled.

On Feb. 26, El Salvador's National Assembly voted to essentially restore a broad amnesty that had been overturned by the nation's Supreme Court in 2016. With about half the assembly refusing to participate in the vote, legislators from the right-wing Arena party approved a bill purportedly to prosecute war crimes. But the proposal is so riddled with loopholes it would in practical terms mean continued impunity.

The current president of El Salvador, Nayib Bukele, ran as an independent and is not beholden to either of El Salvador's two major parties, Arena and the F.M.L.N., each representing a different side from the civil war. Calling the national reconciliation proposal a "fraud of a law," he vetoed the bill on Feb. 28, but an override attempt remains a possibility.

El Salvador's bishops have urged the passage of "an authentic 'National Reconciliation Law,' which effectively allows justice to be administered to the victims, that the truth of the crimes committed is known and that

due damages are established." These are worthy ambitions.

Yet even if the prosecution of offenders proceeds, the State Department sanctions list of those culpable for El Salvador's misery will remain incomplete. Many of the former foot soldiers and members of the high command connected to the worst acts—like the U.C.A. assassinations, the murder of St. Óscar Romero and the massacres at El Mozote and El Calabozo—received counterinsurgency training at the infamous School of the Americas (now the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation) at Fort Benning, Ga.

Over successive U.S. administrations, support for El Salvador's military and civilian leadership continued even as the death toll among campesinos, priests, catechists, trade unionists and intellectuals rose higher. The United States, too, has a share of the suffering and the instability it has engendered to atone for. In 1989, then Fordham University president Joseph A. O'Hare, S.J., asked a question that still haunts us: "Can we hand weapons to butchers and remain unstained by the blood of their innocent victims?"

Take Me Out to the (Minor League) Ballgame

The arrival of another season of baseball is for many Americans like the first bloom of the crocus or the first hint of green on the tree: Springtime is here again, and the national pastime has returned. Across the 30 cities in North America that have Major League Baseball teams and the 160 that have minor-league teams affiliated with big-league clubs,

baseball gloves and caps will come out of the closet, Cracker Jack will be bought by the barrel, and the sound of bat hitting ball will once again bring the crowds to their feet.

But if M.L.B. has its way, the number of Americans who will be able to see a professional baseball game in person will be much curtailed in the next few years. As a new Professional Baseball

Agreement (the current one expires this year) is worked out, M.L.B. has proposed reducing the number of affiliated minor-league teams by 42 squads.

M.L.B. Deputy Commissioner Dan Halem told Baseball America last October that M.L.B.'s goal was to improve minor-league baseball by upgrading facilities and increasing salaries, as well as by improving travel

conditions teams face and reducing the distance between teams in different minor leagues.

Under the current agreement, M.L.B. teams pay the salaries of the coaches and players of their affiliated minor-league clubs, while the minor-league franchises pay for everything else (including travel, equipment and stadium upkeep). That arrangement has allowed teams to survive and even thrive in smaller towns. But under the new arrangement, perhaps only half a dozen of the 42 teams losing their affiliation with M.L.B. clubs would be able to survive.

Resistance to the plan has made for some unlikely bedfellows: Two leaders of the opposition are Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont, a self-described democratic socialist, and Representative Kevin McCarthy of California, a Republican stalwart.

For many American families, the only way to experience our national pastime in person is at a minor-league game. The average ticket price for a major-league baseball game in 2019 was \$32.99. With parking rates often at \$20 or more, a family of four had to spend \$150 just to get into the ballpark last year. By contrast, a 2019 survey conducted by Minor League Baseball estimated the average cost for a family of four to attend a minor-league game was \$69.60, including four hot dogs, four drinks and parking.

In addition, the massive financial disparity between fan and M.L.B. player (the average player's salary in 2019 was over \$4,000,000) is nonexistent in the minors, where salaries can be as little as \$1,160 a month. Can there be a compromise between \$13,000 a year for one player and \$35 million for another?

According to Forbes, M.L.B. amassed a record \$10.7 billion in revenue for 2019. The league owes it to their fans to make the game available to everyone who would hope not to be taken at a ballgame.

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How can I reconcile the good and evil of Jean Vanier?

A couple of weeks ago, I removed the photo of Jean Vanier from my desk.

I had written almost completely uncritically about the founder of L'Arche several times for **America**. I called him a “revered spiritual master and prophetic voice,” whose messages “always bear repeating,” in a review of his last book; I wrote **America**’s obituary of Vanier; I teared up on camera while talking with Tina Bovermann of L'Arche USA about Vanier’s life.

But in late February, L'Arche released an internal report describing in detail credible allegations that Vanier sexually abused six non-disabled women. The report says that Vanier initiated sex in the context of spiritual direction and offered “highly unusual spiritual or mystical explanations...to justify these behaviors.” This kind of behavior echoes the sexual abuse perpetrated by Vanier’s spiritual mentor, Thomas Philippe, O.P. The L'Arche report also shows that Vanier lied about how much he had known about accusations against Father Philippe.

Ms. Bovermann spoke to my colleague Michael J. O’Loughlin about the abuse allegations against Vanier: “I can’t wrap my head around it,” she said. Nor can I.

I do not mean that I disbelieve the women who brought these accusations forward. The public excerpts of their testimonies are harrowing, and I trust the thoroughness of the third-party investigation. What I mean is that it is difficult for me to reconcile Vanier’s abuse with my long-held image of him as a saint.

I was introduced to Jean Vanier’s work as a senior in college, when I was stressed about my impending graduation to “the real world.” Would I make enough money? Would I move up

quickly in my career? Would people think well of me?

One night, I sat with my friend Katie, who had recently returned from a year at a L'Arche community in Ireland. In response to my anxieties, she asked if I’d ever heard of Jean Vanier. She explained to me his idea that while society tells us we will find happiness only by climbing the ladder of wealth and prestige, true Christian happiness comes from climbing down the ladder, choosing to give up power and money in order to live in community and solidarity with the poor and outcast.

This was a revelation. I tried to apply the idea, however poorly, in my decision-making. I deeply wanted the true happiness Vanier pointed to. I read his books slowly and meditatively and urged others to do the same. After his death last May, I displayed a photo of him at my desk. Like many, I believed he was a saint.

Part of me wonders now if I was foolish, if I should have known better than to valorize any Catholic this way after watching Theodore McCarrick’s fall from grace in 2018 or even watching St. John Paul II’s record on sexual abuse being called into serious question. If such widely respected men could commit decades of abuse or turn a blind eye to allegations, why did I never consider that Jean Vanier could do the same?

I think of the women who had to endure the trauma of hearing a man who had sexually manipulated them be called a “living saint” when he was alive and then eulogized with such respect last year. Although none of the women’s allegations became public until last month, perhaps if we had thought more critically about Vanier’s relationship with Father Philippe, we

would have been more hesitant to canonize Vanier in our imagination.

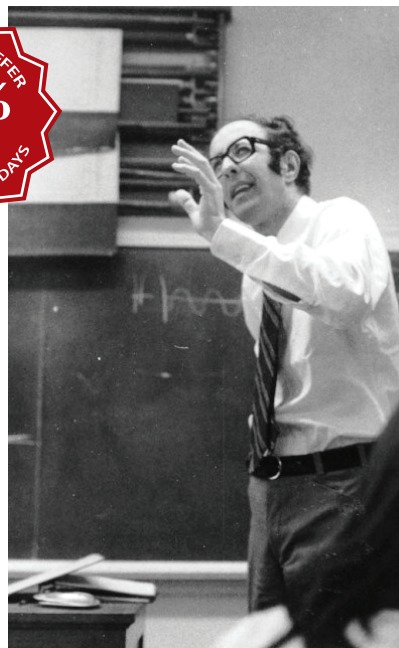
This kind of critical thinking will be vital as we who admired Vanier struggle to reconcile the good he did with the abuse he perpetrated. It is difficult, but possible and necessary, to hold the truth of his good and evil at the same time. Holding these ideas in tension both invites, as the leaders of L'Arche International wrote, “mourn[ing] a certain image we may have had of Jean” and raises important concerns about who holds power in the church, the ways that power can corrupt those who hold it and the disturbing links between spiritual and sexual abuse in so many similar cases in the church.

Mourning and grappling with the upsetting paradox of Jean Vanier has made me angry, but I am trying to resist despair. I can no longer in good conscience call Jean Vanier a saint, nor will I hypothesize about any conversion he may have had before or after his death, but I cannot accept the disturbing truth about him as proof, as some have understood it, that sanctity does not exist. Rather, I think it challenges us to consider our own and others’ simultaneous capacity for profound goodness and evil, to seek models of holiness away from the world’s spotlight and to pursue holiness ourselves far from the spotlight, at the bottom of the ladder.

Colleen Dulle, *assistant producer of audio and video at America Media.*

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A WORLD OF UNREST

Watchdog group counts dozens of flashpoints across the globe

By Robert David Sullivan

26 'CONFLICTS AROUND THE WORLD OF CONCERN TO THE UNITED STATES'



MEXICO
Criminal violence

VENEZUELA
Political instability

UKRAINE: Tensions with Russia
TURKEY: Conflict with armed Kurdish groups

LEBANON: Political instability
ISRAEL: Israeli/Palestinian conflict
EGYPT: Political instability

LIBYA: Civil war

MALI: Political destabilization

NIGERIA: Boko Haram

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC: Internal violence

If your nerves are on edge, it may just be from paying more attention to international news. Instability seems to reign in almost every region of the world, and the United States must deal with an ever-changing list of foreign policy crises.

As of Feb. 6, the Center for Preventive Action—part of the Council on Foreign Relations, a nonprofit think tank—listed 26 “conflicts around the world of concern to the United States” on its interactive Global Conflict Tracker. Two were added to the list last year: political instability in Venezuela and the standoff between the United States and Iran. Ironically, while it does not meet the definition of a conflict, the coronavirus epidemic has become a security concern of more immediacy than any of the simmering crises on the map.

The C.P.A. asks government officials, foreign policy experts and academics to assess ongoing and potential conflicts based on their likelihood to occur in a given year and their potential impact on U.S. interests. The statuses of each conflict are re-evaluated monthly or as events dictate.

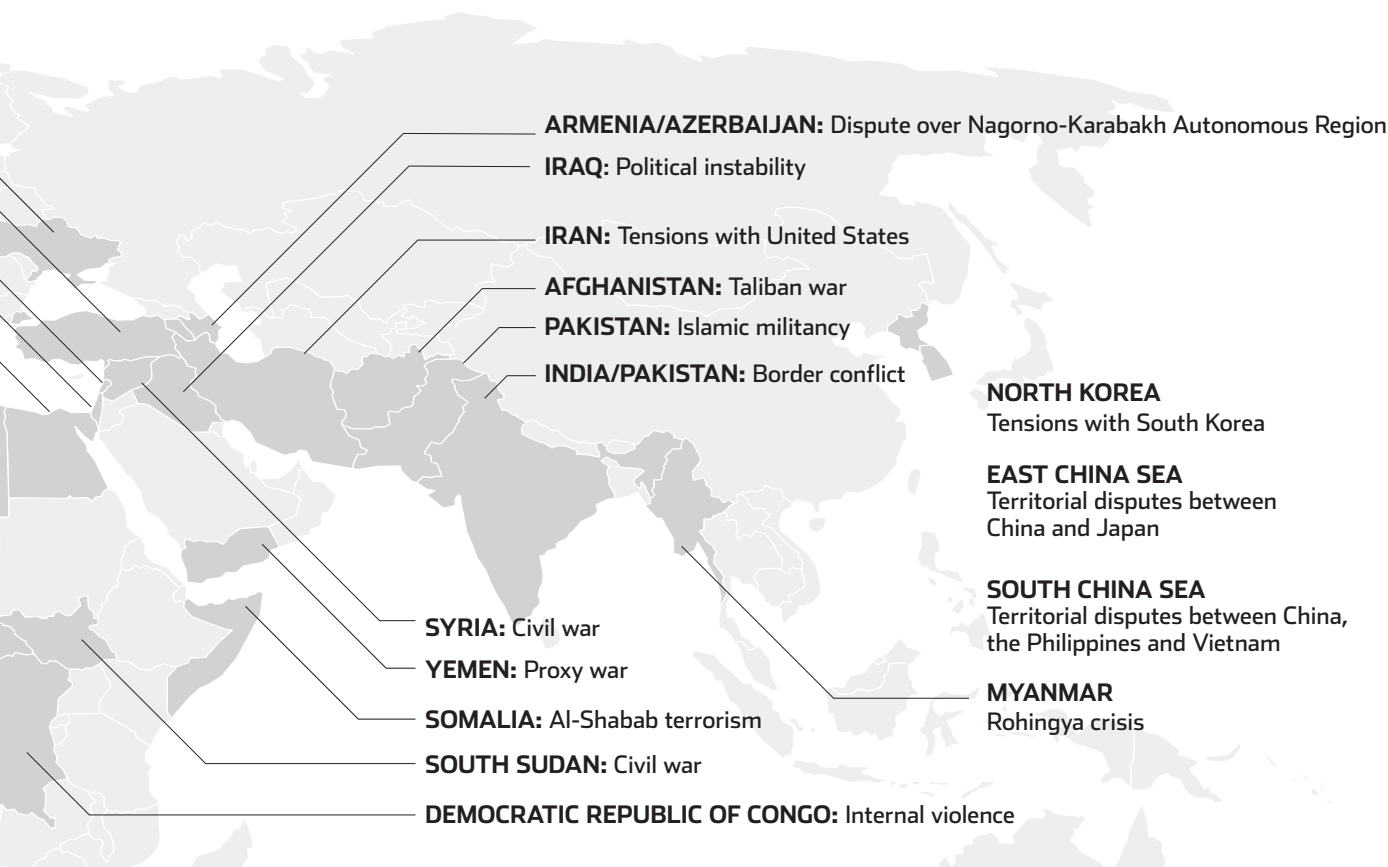
“The majority of the conflicts on the list reflect a general decline in the ability of nation-states to grapple with drivers of political unrest,” said Megan Geckle, assistant

director of the C.P.A.

She noted that new threats may be on the horizon: “Climate change is a so-called threat multiplier and will continue to both exacerbate ongoing conflicts and escalate tensions in regions already experiencing scarcity or instability.” In addition, nuclear proliferation is a renewed concern: “Iran and North Korea continue to express interest in acquiring or developing nuclear weapons. If they do, other countries like Saudi Arabia and Turkey may attempt to do so as well.”

The Conflict Tracker is only one listing of global hotspots, and not everyone accepts it as the last word. “It reflects a narrow, U.S.-centric view of world politics that exaggerates some conflicts to suit American foreign policy interests,” said David Cortright, a special advisor for policy studies at the Keough School of Global Affairs, affiliated with the University of Notre Dame, in Indiana.

Mr. Cortright continued, “The tracker makes no mention of the continuation and rise of authoritarianism and repression in Turkey, India, Russia, China, Burma, Egypt and other countries, ignoring the risk of conflict that often results from the denial of religious and political freedom and the suppression of human rights.”



Oddly, while Mexico is on the map for its “criminal violence,” the Conflict Tracker does not include the similarly afflicted three nations of Central America’s Northern Triangle (though they are on a separate list of “top-tier priorities”). The latest annual report from Human Rights Watch describes El Salvador as having “among the world’s highest homicide rates” but “ineffective” security forces; Guatemala as plagued by “violence and extortion by powerful criminal organizations”; and Honduras as experiencing “unjustified lethal force and other excessive use of force by security forces” against human rights activists.

Eight of the 10 nations identified by the Christian group Open Doors as having “extreme persecution” of Christians (led by North Korea) are also on the Conflict Tracker, suggesting a correlation between overall violence and religious conflict. Open Doors also includes Eritrea, where an authoritarian regime represses churches not approved by the state, and Sudan, which Open Doors says is now ruled by Islamic extremists after the secession of South Sudan.

Here are the 26 areas of conflicts currently being tracked by the C.P.A., grouped by major category.

Civil wars

- **Afghanistan:** In late February, the United States and the Taliban began negotiating the withdrawal of troops remaining here after a U.S. offensive that began in 2001. If successful, the talks could also lead to an end of the conflict between the fundamentalist religious group and Afghan government forces.
- **Iraq:** Still reeling from the U.S. invasion in 2003, Iraq is also suffering conflicts between Sunni and Shiite Muslims, tensions between Shiite militias and Christians in the Nineveh region and a Kurdish separatist movement in the north.
- **Libya:** Fighting continues between the government and the Libyan National Army, headed by a loyalist to Muammar al-Qaddafi. ISIS is also a threat here.
- **South Sudan:** In 2013 violence erupted between the two largest ethnic groups in South Sudan, the Dinka and the Nuer. The two sides signed a cease-fire in August 2018, but it was not until Feb. 20 of this year that they announced plans for a unity government.
- **Syria:** A civil war between President Assad’s government, backed by Russia and Iran, and rebel groups backed by the United States, Saudi Arabia and Turkey has lasted since 2011. In addition, ISIS remains a threat, and Turkish forc-

es continue to fight Syrian Kurds.

• **Yemen:** Conflict between Houthi insurgents and the Sunni government began in 2014 and has turned into a proxy war. Saudi Arabia is backing the government, with logistical and intelligence assistance from the United States, and Iran is supporting the rebels.

Territorial disputes

• **Armenia/Azerbaijan:** Both former components of the Soviet Union claim the Nagorno-Karabakh region. If border skirmishes resume, Russia has promised to defend Armenia, and Turkey has pledged to support Azerbaijan.

• **Israel/Palestine:** Since the Oslo Accords in 1993, the Palestinian Authority has governed the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, but clashes between Israel and the Palestinians remain frequent.

• **East China Sea:** China and Japan both claim eight islands with oil and natural gas reserves in an area that is within 200 miles of each nation.

• **South China Sea:** China claims sovereignty over a large swath of this area, putting it in conflict with Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam. China has also built 3,200 acres of military and industrial facilities on artificial islands it has created in disputed waters.

• **Turkey/Kurdish region of Iraq:** Turkey has been targeting Kurdistan Workers Party bases in Iraq, which it says are the source of attacks on Turkish military bases. In turn, Iraq has complained about Turkish incursions into its territory.

• **Ukraine:** Violence in eastern Ukraine between Russian-backed separatist forces and the Ukrainian military has killed thousands since 2014.

Political instability

• **The Democratic Republic of Congo:** Current violence began with the refugee crisis resulting from the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. Armed groups continue to terrorize civilians, and the results of the 2018 presidential election are still in dispute.

• **Egypt:** The government is battling militant groups associated with ISIS and Al Qaeda, but its counterterrorism measures may alienate civilian populations.

• **Lebanon:** Since gaining independence in 1943, Lebanon has been plagued by conflicts among its three major religious groups: Maronite Christians, Shiite Muslims and Sunni Muslims. The result has been political gridlock, recently made worse by a major influx of refugees from the civil war in Syria.

• **Venezuela:** There is a stand-off between President

Nicolás Maduro and the National Assembly, which declared Mr. Maduro's election illegitimate, a view shared by the opposition leader Juan Guaidó.

Interstate conflict

• **India/Pakistan:** Territorial disputes over the Kashmir region have led to major wars in 1947 and 1965, and the two nations regularly exchange fire across their border.

• **Iran/United States:** Since the United States withdrew from the Iran nuclear deal in 2018, both nations have engaged in drone and missile attacks on the other's forces in the Middle East.

• **North Korea/South Korea:** The Demilitarized Zone here is one of the most heavily armed borders in the world.

Sectarian violence

• **Central African Republic:** An insurgency by armed Muslim groups has prompted Christian fighters to carry out reprisals, escalating religious conflict here.

• **Myanmar:** The Rohingya, a Muslim group numbering over one million, face hostility from both the government and Buddhist nationalist groups. The government is also facing insurgencies by several armed ethnic groups, including the United Wa State Army and the Kachin Independence Army.

• **Nigeria:** Boko Haram, an Islamist militant group, continues to attack other religious groups, while the Fulani, a Muslim ethnic group, have been attacking Christian villages in the Plateau region.

Transnational terrorism

• **Mali:** Militant groups affiliated with ISIS and Al Qaeda have attacked U.N. peacekeepers and spread to neighboring countries in western and northern Africa.

• **Pakistan:** Militant groups, including an ISIS affiliate, continue to attack security forces and civilians within Pakistan and are also suspected of infiltrating Afghanistan.


• **Somalia:** Al Shabab, another Al Qaeda affiliate in East Africa, is not only attacking the central government here but also targeting neighboring Kenya, a U.S. ally.

Criminal violence

• **Mexico:** Drug cartels threaten the Mexican government and pose risks to civilians both here and in the neighboring United States.

America correspondents are covering many of these conflicts; look for the Dispatches section at americamagazine.org.

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A procession in 2017 commemorates the 28th anniversary of the Jesuit slayings at San Salvador's Central American University.

State Department sanctions 13 suspected in 1989 slaying of Jesuits in El Salvador

A State Department decision to bar 13 former Salvadoran military officers and soldiers, and their family members, from entry into the United States has been described by some regional analysts as a symbolic gesture. But others see a possible opening toward justice for victims of extrajudicial killings and human rights abuses perpetrated during El Salvador's brutal, 12-year civil war.

In a statement released on Jan. 29, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said that U.S. officials have "credible information" that the 13 men named "were involved in the planning and execution of the extrajudicial killings of six Jesuit priests and two others taking refuge at the Jesuit pastoral center on November 16, 1989, on the campus of [the José Simeón Cañas] Central American University [U.C.A.] in El Salvador."

"We welcome this development and hope that it may prove to be a step towards finally bringing these men to justice," said Ted Penton, S.J., secretary for justice and ecology at the Jesuit Conference of Canada and the United States, commenting on the decision by email.

Almudena Bernabeu, the co-founder of the Guernica Group, an international campaign to bring perpetrators of international crimes and human rights violations to justice, speculated that Spanish arrest warrants may have figured in the State Department decision. A State Department spokesperson confirmed by email that the visa sanctions were triggered by a routine investigation after "an individual connected to this incident sought to travel to the United States."

The Salvadoran civil war between the country's right-wing, quasi-military government and a coalition of leftist rebel forces known as the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front raged from 1979 until 1992. An estimated 75,000 people were killed, and 8,000 more remain missing.

Among those victims late in the conflict were the U.C.A.

Jesuits who were executed on the grounds of the university—Ignacio Ellacuría, Ignacio Martín-Baró, Segundo Montes, Juan Ramón Moreno, Joaquín López y López and Amando López. They had been targeted because of their persistent efforts to encourage a negotiated peace and their criticism of the government's part in the war's ongoing brutality. Killed with them were Elba Ramos, a housekeeper, and her 15-year-old daughter, Celina Ramos.

In recent months efforts within El Salvador to bring human rights violators to justice have been rejuvenated by a court decision that in 2016 overturned a general amnesty granted in 1993. Protected by that amnesty, Salvadoran military personnel had for years ignored legal proceedings against them in Spain. (Five of the murdered Jesuits were Spanish citizens.) Now the U.S. sanctions suggest, Ms. Bernabeu said, that "this is something that is going to be lingering in their lives, and obviously it is going to pop up every single time they try to travel or they try to do anything internationally."

In May, El Salvador's two largest political parties, the Nationalist Republican Alliance and the F.M.L.N., allied in an attempt to push a new amnesty law through the National Assembly before the independent Nayib Bukele could be inaugurated as president. That effort failed, but a revived effort to restore an amnesty that would block prosecution of individuals from both sides of the conflict is currently making its way through the Salvadoran national assembly. The new law could be approved in March, according to Ms. Bernabeu, who described it as "another effort to shield the high command."

Kevin Clarke, *chief correspondent.*
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Chicago has a \$92 million plan to save 30 Catholic schools

A group of preschoolers at St. Ethelreda School, located in Chicago's Auburn-Gresham neighborhood, walk single-file down a hallway. As the youngsters pass by their principal, some turn to wave. And with a smile on her face, Principal Denise Spells waves back.

Smiles have been plentiful at St. Ethelreda since Jan. 29, when the Big Shoulders Fund, a Chicago foundation that supports the city's Catholic schools, and the Archdiocese of Chicago each pledged more than \$40 million to support 30 schools serving about 5,600 students on Chicago's South and West Sides—\$47.5 million from Big Shoulders and \$44.9 million from the archdiocese. For St. Ethelreda's principal, the news could not be more welcome. She said she ran through the hallways announcing the news to staff when she learned of it earlier this year.

"The school is still open and still standing because God left us here for a reason," Dr. Spells said.

The money will help with scholarships, technology, curriculum and professional development. The archdiocese pledged not to shutter any of the schools while the program is in effect, freeing staff and parents from perennial worries about closures and giving donors peace of mind that the schools will be around long enough to put their contributions to good use.

The schools will remain under the direction of the

Archdiocese of Chicago, but the arrangement gives the foundation, established in 1986 by the late Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, more say in the hiring and training of principals. Joshua Hale, the president and chief executive officer of the Big Shoulders Fund, said the partnership gives the participating schools "a new lease on life."

"Think of what that means for a principal, an educator, a parent, a guardian in these neighborhoods, to not worry every year, 'Is my child's school going to be open?' That helps with a lot of confidence everywhere," Mr. Hale said. "If not for this agreement, I don't know how many of these schools would be around the next three years."

Just weeks before the announcement with Big Shoulders, the archdiocese said that five more schools would close next year. The archdiocese's 200 elementary and secondary schools still comprise one of the largest U.S. private school systems; but Catholic schools in Chicago, like others across the country, struggle to keep enrollment high enough to cover operating costs.

Total enrollment in Chicago Catholic schools today is about 71,000, down from more than 95,000 eight years ago. According to the National Catholic Education Association, more than 1,200 Catholic schools have been closed or consolidated since 2009, and the number of students enrolled in Catholic schools has fallen by about 403,000 in that time.



Photo courtesy of the Big Shoulders Fund.

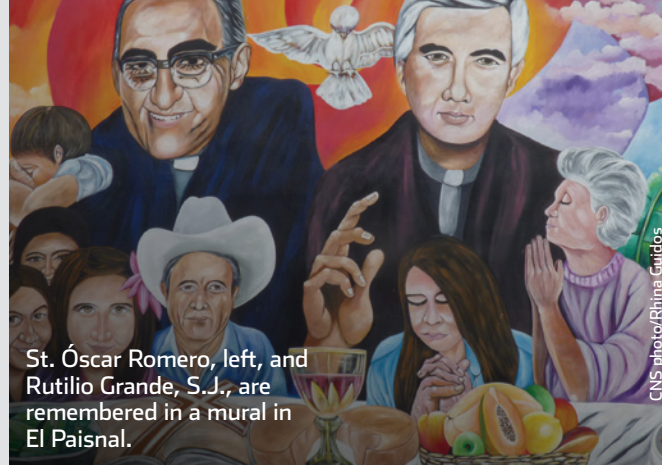
Lala Bonner and River Parks are all smiles at Chicago's St. Ethelreda Catholic School.

Mr. Hale called the new partnership “a massive change” in terms of funding, the length of commitment and school management. He said he believes the model could be replicated in other dioceses, if partnering groups were willing to consider scale and focus on “preserving the historically important elements of locally owned and run Catholic schools.”

The new agreement covers 30 schools, but Big Shoulders will continue to support 45 other schools in Chicago. Together, the 75 schools educate about 20,000 students, according to the foundation. Most of the students, about 80 percent, are students of color; and more than six in 10 live in poverty.

In 2007, the archdiocese closed the parish that once sponsored the school, but Dr. Spells led the community in convincing church leaders to keep St. Ethelreda open. Enrollment is rebounding, graduates are attending some of the city's best public and private high schools, and last year the school's chess team was the state champion.

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St. Óscar Romero, left, and Rutilio Grande, S.J., are remembered in a mural in El Paisnal.

CNS photo/Rhina Guidos

GOODNEWS: Pope Francis recognizes martyrdom of Rutilio Grande and companions

The Vatican announced on Feb. 21 that Pope Francis has authorized the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints to publish a decree regarding “the martyrdom of the Servants of God Rutilio Grande García, professed priest of the Society of Jesus, and two lay companions, killed in El Salvador, in hatred of the faith, on March 12, 1977.” The recognition of their martyrdom means that they may soon be beatified—that is, declared “blessed”—most likely in a ceremony in El Salvador later this year.

Rutilio Grande was born in El Paisnal, El Salvador, on July 5, 1928. He was ordained a priest on July 30, 1959. He courageously stood with El Salvador's campesinos, teaching them how to become advocates for their own social and spiritual liberation. He suffered public persecution and was eventually assassinated alongside two community members: the lay catechist Manuel Solórzano, 72, and Nelson Rutilio Lemus, just 16. The attack occurred while they were driving from their parish in Aguilares to El Paisnal, the village of his birth, to celebrate the novena of San José.

They had picked up three small children on the road, who were in the back of the car when a group of men ambushed Grande and his companions. The three terrified children were not injured physically and were allowed to escape from the back of the car.

Grande was the first priest to be killed before the country's civil war, but others would soon suffer the same fate. His violent death greatly disturbed his friend, Óscar Romero; indeed, the loss had a transformative effect on St. Óscar Romero's life and ministry. Three years later, he too would die a martyr's death.

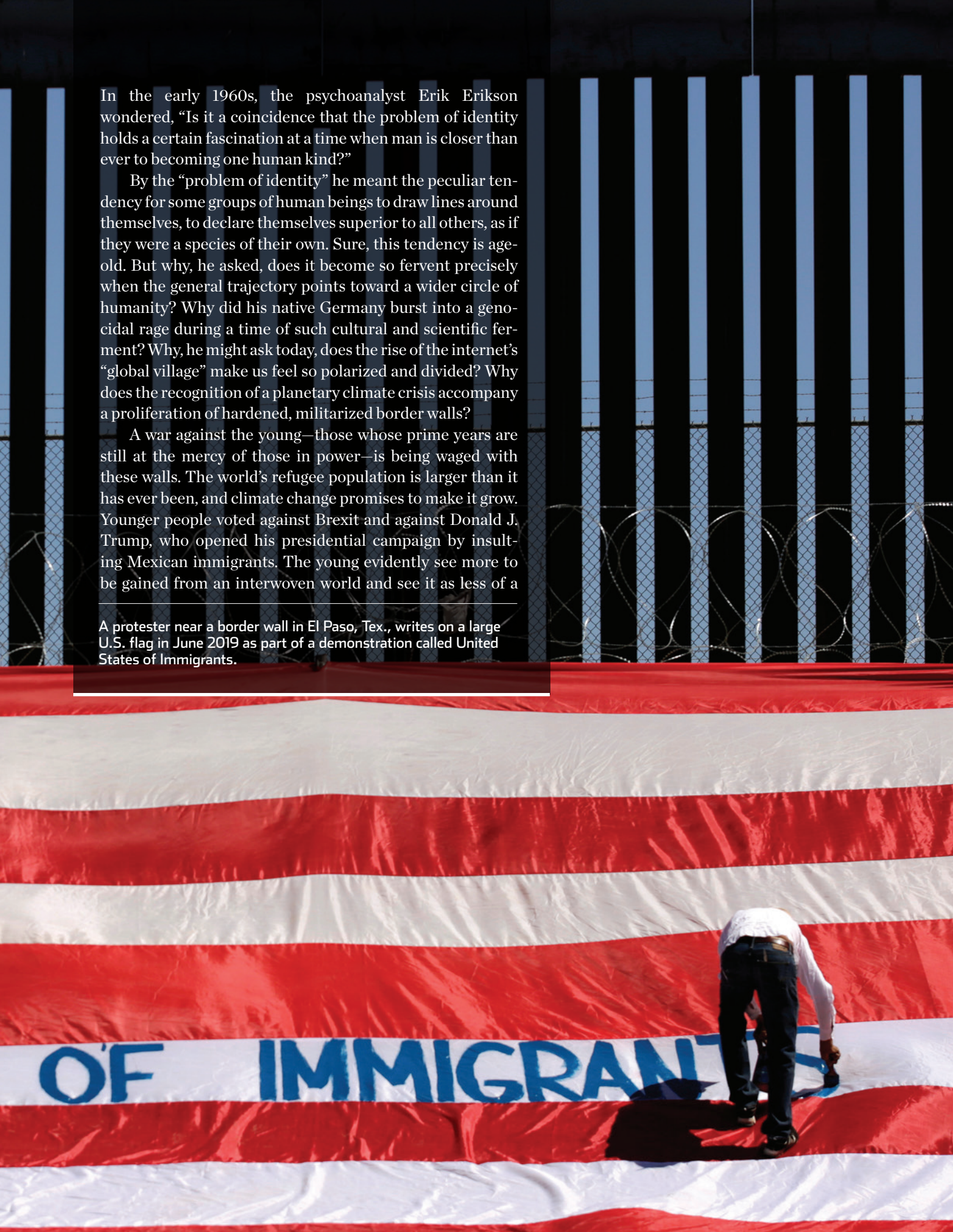
Gerard O'Connell, *Vatican correspondent.*
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A CATHOLIC CASE FOR OPEN BORDERS

*As walls go up, so does
the hoarding behind them*

By Nathan Schneider

UNITED STATES

A large U.S. flag with red and white stripes is spread out on the ground. In the background, a border wall with chain-link fencing and vertical bars is visible. A person is standing on the flag, writing on it.

In the early 1960s, the psychoanalyst Erik Erikson wondered, “Is it a coincidence that the problem of identity holds a certain fascination at a time when man is closer than ever to becoming one human kind?”

By the “problem of identity” he meant the peculiar tendency for some groups of human beings to draw lines around themselves, to declare themselves superior to all others, as if they were a species of their own. Sure, this tendency is age-old. But why, he asked, does it become so fervent precisely when the general trajectory points toward a wider circle of humanity? Why did his native Germany burst into a genocidal rage during a time of such cultural and scientific ferment? Why, he might ask today, does the rise of the internet’s “global village” make us feel so polarized and divided? Why does the recognition of a planetary climate crisis accompany a proliferation of hardened, militarized border walls?

A war against the young—those whose prime years are still at the mercy of those in power—is being waged with these walls. The world’s refugee population is larger than it has ever been, and climate change promises to make it grow. Younger people voted against Brexit and against Donald J. Trump, who opened his presidential campaign by insulting Mexican immigrants. The young evidently see more to be gained from an interwoven world and see it as less of a

A protester near a border wall in El Paso, Tex., writes on a large U.S. flag in June 2019 as part of a demonstration called United States of Immigrants.

OF IMMIGRANTS

An economy with a soul will depend on the right of mobility.

choice; they know they could be the next climate refugees.

This fall, at the invitation of Pope Francis, young people from around the world will gather in Assisi, Italy, to share ideas about how they might “give a soul to the economy of tomorrow.” The very premise of such a gathering offers a reminder that an economy with a soul will depend on the right of mobility. How many people with something to contribute to this meeting have scant hope of getting there? The pope shined a light on Italy’s especially deadly borders when he took his first papal trip, in 2013, to the island of Lampedusa, where many thousands of drowned travelers from impoverished and war-torn countries have washed ashore.

“Those who build walls will become prisoners of the walls they put up,” he warned reporters last year.

From the Great Firewall that divides China’s internet from the rest of the world to the detention centers imprisoning children along the U.S.-Mexico border, there are many ways to be contained within the borders of our own making—morally, physically and imaginatively. The towering concrete wall that runs through Bethlehem has made peace in that land more elusive. And the world’s governments have been building these things on a tear. Even as our economies become more connected, as networks transmit our voices and translate our languages, there have never been more walls than there are now.

As more and more walls go up, so, too, the hoarding behind them increases. Reece Jones, a political geographer, points out that since the rise of nation-states, economic inequality has transformed from mainly a phenomenon within given societies to become vast gulfs between countries. Qataris enjoy a per-capita gross domestic product of \$126,898, while for Burundians it is \$744. Opportunity and even survival in the global economy depend profoundly upon which side of which border one is born on. Whole countries have become like vast debtors’ prisons—Yemen and Bangladesh, for instance, have among the world’s least useful passports, as they allow minimal visa-free travel. Such restrictions punish people for being poor, with no way out. When some

try to circumvent such perverse circumstances they face intentional, mortal deterrents, from capsized boats at sea to guards who shoot to kill. These are, as the title of Mr. Jones’s excellent book puts it, “violent borders.”

Kristin E. Heyer, a theologian at Boston College, emphasizes the effects of border regimes on families who find themselves stretched across them. She has written in **America**, “Current policies that prevent immigrant workers from attaining or maintaining family unity treat them as economic units and do not recognize their full humanity.” The violence thus cascades across generations.

Meanwhile, the idea of “open borders” has become a slur—a way for conservatives to caricature liberals, who do not actually believe in open borders. (Barack Obama’s administration deported people at higher rates than President Trump’s.) Rather than a slur, open borders should be something to aspire toward. It is, in particular, an aspiration Christians cannot easily dismiss.

The Fallacy of Catholic Nationalism

It has become something of a fad lately to attempt the formidable task of articulating a coherent Catholic nationalism, apparently among those eager to reconcile their faith with Trumpism. It is indeed a heavy lift.

Published in *First Things* last year, the manifesto “Against the Dead Consensus” cautiously embraces the president thus: “We embrace the new nationalism insofar as it stands against the utopian ideal of a borderless world that, in practice, leads to universal tyranny.” Imagine the most absurdly radical version of immediate border-abolition, the authors suggest, and perhaps Mr. Trump’s insults and walls and children in cages seem comparatively tolerable. I am not so sure.

Crisis magazine has offered a “Catholic case against open borders.” Its arguments hinge on expanding the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*’s narrow qualification of the obligation that governments “welcome the foreigner” by adding “to the extent they are able,” which would broaden the exception to the point that it starts to look like the rule. The American Conservative, in turn, takes a historical tack and contends that “Thomas Aquinas was no citizen of the world.” I find this a perplexing claim about an Italian who lived in Paris and risked his life to bring Latin Christianity into conversation with Greek, Muslim and



Construction workers in the United States work on a new section of the border wall as seen from Tijuana, Mexico on Feb. 18, 2019.



Jewish philosophers. But yes, of course, he also taught that group identities exist and that proximity heightens our obligations to a neighbor.

Recall that, in addition to plain prejudice, the thing that most irked 19th-century Protestant Americans about Catholic immigrants was that they might hold transnational loyalties. Like most immigrants, they did—to their places of origin and in many cases indeed to Rome—alongside any commitment to their new home. We should wear that slander as a badge of honor. Catholic Christianity is resolutely transnational. It constantly negotiates local cultures with global unity and solidarity. It is a missionary church—now, often, with former mission fields re-evangelizing older dominions. When the church held sway across Europe, its polities were more like networks than countries. Nation-states were a consequence of the Reformation, part of a broader movement of enclosure that also fenced once-common pastures and forests, making creation more available for private accumulation.

I probably do not need to rehearse Jesus' border crossings, but they turn up so often in my kids' Bible stories that I am constantly reminded of them. He is born the traveler for whom the inns have no room, then flees with his parents to Egypt for safety from mass murder, then wanders

into Samaria and shocks his friends and the Samaritans alike by treating the locals as fellow human beings. It is not cause for much surprise, then, that his early followers were described in a second-century Christian document as people who "live in their own countries as though they were only passing through" and for whom "any country can be their homeland."

This kind of vagabonding was also the practice, centuries later, of St. Francis, whose memory brings the pope to Assisi for the upcoming event. St. Francis, too, traversed the Mediterranean world, even crossing the border lines of battle to visit the camp of Sultan Malik al-Kamil of Egypt. For the less mobile followers of St. Benedict, who vow stability to a single place, the injunction in their Rule is clear: "All guests who present themselves are to be welcomed as Christ."

To the extent that this religion has served to justify colonial occupations and arbitrary "nation-building," it has much border-drawing of its own to repent for. But one is hard-pressed to justify such activities the closer one comes to the heart of the faith.

Alongside faith, reason offers its testimony. "Virtually all economists agree that immigration increases the wealth of the United States," writes the prominent George Mason University economist Alex Tabarrok. Mr. Tabarrok, whose

Even as our economies become more connected, as networks transmit our voices and translate our languages, there have never been more walls than there are now.

politics lean right, advocates for radically open borders. In contrast to popular (and presidential) discourse, immigration provides host countries with a slew of benefits, from job market expansion to small business creation, and U.S. immigrants commit crimes at rates well below the crime rates of the native-born.

The chief arguments against freer migration, including among the aspiring Catholic nationalists, are grounded in people's concerns about whether they can tolerate having neighbors different from themselves. "Diversity is a challenge," writes James Kalb in *Crisis Magazine*. "Surely, then, multiplying challenges without a strong reason is a bad idea." This is not a Christian argument, especially when desperate people are in need of help. Christians should be better than that.

"In sharp contrast to dominant discourse," Ms. Heyer writes, "sovereignty and hospitality are understood in the tradition to be mutually implicating." If we are worthy of the power to self-govern, we need to be capable of learning to welcome.

Even the coarse legalism of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* cannot help but reveal the tenderness of Christian hospitality. "Public authorities," we are told, "should see to it that the natural right is respected that places a guest under the protection of those who receive him."

More Welcome, Less Refusal

As on so many matters, Jesus did not provide a policy proposal or a plug-and-play politics. I do not claim he made any kind of injunction against all barriers to migration for all time. Nor does the church. Yet it does seem clear that both the church and its founder pose a challenge that points unmistakably in one direction: more welcome, less refusal. How can we be more hospitable than we previously thought possible? Yes, there are limits to our ability to meet any such challenge, but the limits should not be confused with the goal. How can we make a world in which it is easier to be welcoming?

For those of us who take seriously the teachings of the last couple of popes, we must also take seriously the dual crises of an economic system structurally deaf to the poor and a planetary ecology that we have damaged to the point of no return. Survival will increasingly mean migration. These are not times when a mere defense of good order and its accompanying border lines will do. Nor are these times when we can afford to be rash or utopian.

Forgive me for summarizing my proposal with a bit of jargon: Call it "migratory subsidiarity." The migratory part simply recognizes that all living things on this planet share a common home, and just as birds and butterflies move to meet their needs, people may need to move as well. We have a planetary internet and a planetary climate—why not



a planetary right of movement? Subsidiarity recalls the old idea in the Catholic tradition that governance should occur locally whenever possible. Local communities matter just as the whole planet does because they are universes of their own. Communities should have the power to self-determine who they are, what they value and how they welcome.

One could use other terms. Some of my hacker friends talk about “cosmo-localism”; the Zapatistas of southern Mexico speak of the “pluriverse,” a world that can contain many worlds within it. You could call the idea, simply, small-c catholic.

The German theologian Marianne Heimbach-Steins stresses that borders are “an anthropological necessity,” something human beings cannot avoid having in one way or another—and they are also necessarily porous. The questions of whether to have borders at all or whether they should be absolute are red herrings. There are more sensible questions. Which kinds of borders should matter most? What should they restrict and what should they permit? For instance, if one is concerned about cultural diversity as a consequence of migrating people, maybe the border should focus more on preserving cultures and less on containing people.

The current global order tends to work this way: Economic and cultural flows can move largely unrestricted across borders, while human movements face much greater restrictions. Raw materials, finished products, mov-

ies, emails and remittances flow back and forth over the U.S.-Mexico border while people can only peek through the fencing.

Migratory subsidiarity reverses that ordering. People can move, but local communities have more power to use their borders against colonial incursions from distant cultural and financial capitals. Communities have an obligation to welcome others in need, but they can do more to set the terms for how they welcome. They can deepen their distinctiveness and their connection to where they live, but they cannot treat the land as theirs alone. They can keep profiteers’ hands off indigenous ways of life learned from generations on that land, and they can expect newcomers to learn those ways, too. They can also choose to embrace the cultural diversity and the financial flows that migration generates. It is up to them.

All this would require adjusting some basic premises of the global economic and legal order—trade pacts, treaties, racialized sorting. The ubiquitous global corporations might need to give way to more democratic, cooperative business structures that combine global economies of scale with strong local control, diversity and autonomy. In the meantime, we can take small steps to practice our welcoming. We can begin changing what our borders are for.

This is a time when we need to be rethinking many things anyway. And the church has been demanding a reordering of the global social order for long enough. While on the subject of migration, in the 1981 encyclical “*Laborem Exercens*,” Pope John Paul II insisted that “capital should be at the service of labor and not labor at the service of capital.” He asked not just for a change of heart or tone; people must flow as freely as money does. His call requires turning back from the path of militant borderism with which many leaders have become enamored. But a change of tone would be a start.

During an earlier “law and order” presidency, in 1971, Pat Nixon, the first lady, inaugurated Border Field State Park in California, where the U.S.-Mexico border reaches the sea. “I hate to see a fence anywhere,” she said. After crossing the border line to greet Mexican children, she added, “I hope there won’t be a fence here too much longer.” What was then a few strands of barbed wire has become beams and fencing so thick one can barely see through them.



Migrants float on a dinghy before their rescue off the coast of Lampedusa, Italy, in May 2019. Italian bishops have publicly called on Catholics to recognize that all the poor and those who suffer are children of God and that deciding who to assist cannot be based on nationality.

Nathan Schneider, a contributing writer for *America*, is a reporter and professor of media studies at the University of Colorado, Boulder. His latest book is *Everything for Everyone: The Radical Tradition That Is Shaping the Next Economy*.



CRISTO REY DE
EAST BAY HIGH SCHOOL
ST. ELIZABETH CAMPUS

A School Grows in Oakland

By Kaya Oakes



Since the founding of the first Cristo Rey school in Chicago in 1996, Cristo Rey schools have become a national network with multiple religious orders as sponsors.

Photos by Sage Baggott


How Cristo Rey De La Salle is bringing Catholic education to Fruitvale

It is 8 a.m. on a cloudy November morning, and a group of sleepy-eyed high school students in Oakland, Calif., is getting a pep talk. Located in a stucco building showing some signs of age, on a leafy side street and tucked behind an imposingly large church, their school might be just one of many urban high schools in struggling cities, full of kids still trying to wake up. But these 14- and 15-year-olds are not being lectured to about homework or study skills; instead, a young business coach in a suit and tie is reminding them not to use their phones in the office. Outside, vans are arriving to take the students from Cristo Rey De la Salle East Bay High School to their work-study jobs, all located in the offices of local corporations and colleges.


Like all the other 37 Cristo Rey schools in the United States, Cristo Rey De la Salle in Oakland's Fruitvale neighborhood is focused on educating low-income students. Many students who attend Cristo Rey schools come from underperforming and underfunded schools and arrive in high school academically disadvantaged as a result. One day a week, each student works in a corporate office in a job-sharing program that offsets 50 percent of their tuition costs and helps them gain job skills on top of their accelerated academic work.

But as one of the newest Cristo Rey schools, Cristo Rey De la Salle is growing from the ashes of a school closed by the Diocese of Oakland just three years ago. It is growing with the help of groups of low-income students of color who face multiple challenges every day, and it is growing with the guiding charism of the La Salle Christian Brothers, a religious order exclusively committed to education, along with their Lasallian lay colleagues. And it is growing in a city where the relationships between faith, education and business are often uneasy.

Since the founding of the first Cristo Rey school by John Foley, S.J., in Chicago in 1996, Cristo Rey schools have become a national network with multiple religious orders as sponsors. The Brothers of the Christian Schools, also known as the De La Salle Brothers or Lasallians after their founder, St. Jean-Baptiste de La Salle, were already sponsoring two Cristo Rey schools in Tucson, Ariz., and Portland, Ore., and thus were natural partners for Oak-



Urban Catholic schools are struggling to stay open; their enrollment has declined by nearly 30 percent nationwide.



land's first Cristo Rey school. The charism of the brothers is to serve the poor through education; and since they run several area high schools and St. Mary's College, they are embedded in the fabric of Catholic families throughout the Bay Area. (Full disclosure: I am a second-generation alum of St. Mary's College, which my father and sister also attended, and my brother attended St. Mary's High School; so the Christian Brothers have educated a large portion of my family).

Chris Trinidad, the vice president of Cristo Rey De La Salle, who has a background in liturgy and liturgical music as well as education and studied at the Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley, came to the school from a position at St. Mary's High School in Berkeley, so he was already familiar with the Lasallian charism. Mr. Trinidad also completed a three-year course at the Buttimer Institute for Lasallian Studies at St. Mary's College. In the hallways at Cristo Rey De la Salle, the five core Lasallian principles are displayed on large posters: concern for the poor and social justice, faith in the presence of God, quality education, respect for all persons and inclusive community.

Mr. Trinidad says that while the Jesuit charism and the Lasallian charism are similar, the Christian Brothers bring an added dimension to their ministry to students. Lasallians, according to Mr. Trinidad, "believe that before we can teach the mind we have to touch the heart." Mr. Trini-

dad adds that "guiding students, honoring and 'seeing' Jesus in the students entrusted to our care is at the heart of what it means to be Lasallian."

George Van Grieken, F.S.C., the coordinator of Lasallian research and resources at the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools in Rome, also says the Jesuit and Lasallian charisms are similar when it comes to ideas about education. But there are some notable differences. The Rule the Christian Brothers live by is specifically focused on education, and because they are not ordained priests, they do not practice sacramental ministry but instead dedicate themselves fully to education. According to Brother Van Grieken, "the Lasallian charism has the school as its setting, the teacher as its focus and the salvific potential of education as its inspiration." While education is also a significant focus of Jesuit ministry, Jesuits are engaged in every imaginable field of work, it seems, whereas every Lasallian is first and foremost an educator.

Given the poverty and social stresses experienced by students living in Fruitvale, the Lasallian charism makes perfect sense as a framework for their education. But as recently as 2016, when the local Catholic high school, which had been open for nearly a century, closed because of low enrollment, many people in Fruitvale assumed that the era of having a Catholic high school in their neighborhood was over.

Narratives of Tragedy and Struggle

Like many working-class neighborhoods in smaller cities, Fruitvale has rarely made the news. The neighborhood is named for the fruit orchards that spread across the Bay Area in the 20th century, which were mostly tended by immigrant families from Europe. As waves of black and Latino people moved to California during World War II to work in the local shipyards, many of them settled in Fruitvale. A few years after the war, the construction of the Nimitz Freeway through West Oakland meant many working class families' homes there were bulldozed, which pushed even more black and Latino families out of that area and into Fruitvale, on the east side of town. Because redlining was a common practice in Oakland, it was illegal for people of color to buy homes in many parts of town. Fruitvale was one of the exceptions.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the neighborhood became a home for the burgeoning Chicano rights movement, with Cesar Chavez a frequent visitor. The La Raza Unida Party, the Brown Berets and the Clínica de la Raza were all based in Fruitvale. Reflecting Fruitvale's demographic shifts, its Catholic churches today have Masses in Spanish, Tagalog,





The Fruitvale neighborhood of Oakland is a vibrant home to thousands, but it has been scarred by narratives of tragedy and struggle.

Portuguese, Korean, Cantonese, Kmhmu (Laotian), Vietnamese and Ge'ez, the liturgical language of Ethiopia. But the neighborhood has increasingly experienced crime and neglect from the city government, with potholes, broken streetlights, understaffed schools, drug dealers and gangs increasingly becoming problems throughout the area.

Fruitvale made the national news on New Year's Eve in 2008, when Oscar Grant, a resident of the neighborhood, was called a racial slur, punched in the face and shot to death by transit police at the neighborhood train station. Fruitvale gained national attention again when 36 people died in the Ghost Ship warehouse fire in 2016, just a few blocks from the same station. The neighborhood, a vibrant home to thousands, was scarred by narratives of tragedy and struggle.

The memories of those two tragedies have not been erased, and the Cristo Rey De La Salle school is located just blocks from both sites. The Ghost Ship warehouse sits empty, a condemned building where people still come to leave flowers and votive candles. A mural depicting a smiling Grant now appears on the side of the train station where he was shot, and a street in front of the station has been named for him.

And even while it struggles with the ghosts of those incidents, Fruitvale is a new target for developers in the hyper-gentrifying Bay Area, who are installing high speed bus lines to attract tech workers to the neighborhood and building condos as fast as they can. These new buildings appear crammed in among businesses with signage most-

ly in Spanish, Vietnamese and Chinese. But for the neighborhood's economically disadvantaged families, those tech jobs and brand new condos and the paths that lead to them might as well be on Mars.

The Birth of a New School

With the cost of living throughout California skyrocketing, many parents have had to make decisions about the cost of their children's education. In 2016, as the result of precipitous drops in enrollment and the resulting inability to pay teachers, in addition to the diocese being over one hundred million dollars in debt, Bishop Michael Barber of Oakland made the announcement that the diocese was closing six Catholic schools in Oakland. Bishop Barber stated that these closures were necessary to stop the financial "hemorrhaging" caused by a decline in students, which was causing "something of a death spiral for many of our schools." Five were elementary schools, and one, St. Elizabeth's, was a high school that had educated the children of Fruitvale for nearly 100 years.

The closure of Catholic schools is not a new phenomenon, but it has accelerated in recent years. The National Catholic Educational Association reports that between 2009 and 2019, about 1200 Catholic schools closed nationwide. Urban Catholic schools in particular are struggling to stay open, and their enrollment has declined by nearly 30 percent nationwide. These urban closures have been exacerbated by multiple factors, including the the national financial crisis of 2008 and the overall shrinking number of

Catholics in the United States.

Competition from charter schools, which are publicly funded but privately run, has also contributed to Catholic school closures. In spite of the growing backlash against charter schools, in cities like Oakland, where public schools have been marked by decades of dysfunction, charters are still more attractive to many working-class and poor parents than Catholic schools because of the cost of tuition.

According to Chris Trinidad, when the closure of St. Elizabeth High School was announced by the diocese in 2016, the Cristo Rey network began a feasibility study to see if the building might become the home to the next Cristo Rey school. Thus, within a year of St. Elizabeth's closure, Cristo Rey De La Salle was able to open for a "fallow year"—that is, a year during which the operations of the previous school are closed (St. Elizabeth's students were offered transfer to any of the diocese's other high schools) and planning for the new school can begin. Cristo Rey De La Salle officially opened in 2018 with a first-year class of 69 students.

To qualify for enrollment, students must be from families that make less than 75 percent of the local median income, but most students come from families that make less than 35 percent of that amount. In Oakland, that is about \$26,000 a year, well below the local poverty line for a family of four. With work study and sliding scale tuition, most families pay about \$1,000 a year in tuition. The model puts a private school education within range for people who normally could not afford it.

In Oakland, 100 percent of students at Cristo Rey De La Salle are also students of color, according to Jennifer Costello, the director of wholeness at the school. Ms. Costello, a licensed clinical social worker with a background in public school counseling, wanted to return to working in Catholic schools, where she herself had been educated, and saw the opportunity to help staff a brand-new school as a unique one. The student population also matched with her background in trauma counseling. Almost all the students at Cristo Rey De La Salle, according to Ms. Costello, have experienced some sort of trauma, whether from family separation at the border, addiction and incarceration in their families, abuse, having to provide child care for younger siblings or the daily grind of living in poverty in the shadow of one of the world's most expensive cities. Thus the school and Ms. Costello emphasize the idea of wholeness, and of dealing with stress management, time management and building student self-confidence. The Cristo Rey model of education, for all it gives, also "asks a lot of students," she



Chris Trinidad, the vice president of Cristo Rey De La Salle, came to the school from a position at St. Mary's High School in Berkeley, so he was already familiar with the Lasallian charism.

says, and Ms. Costello's office sees a steady stream of them throughout the day, dropping in to talk, get help, vent and strategize.

A Chance to Work

Mr. Trinidad arranged a meeting with three students, and after navigating the school's bustling halls, we sat around a meeting table during their free period. Zach, Vika and Gigi are all sophomores, wearing the school uniform of sweater and tie. At a school that is just midway through its second year of operation, being sophomores gives them the authority of seniors, and each had a maturity and thoughtfulness that reflected this. All three of them said that what attracted them to the school was the opportunity to work.

Zach, who transferred from another Catholic high school, says that the work program "gives you the experience of having to get up in the morning and get prepared for work." Zach described his day at his corporate office as a hectic one: "I had to download over 260 files, and then I had to work on a graphic design for the company, and did all that in five hours." "Dang!" he added, to laughs from everyone. In contrast to school, he says, work provides a





As recently as 2016, many people in Fruitvale assumed that the era of having a Catholic school in their neighborhood was over. Dayanara, Natalie and Luisa are currently students at Cristo Rey De La Salle.

sense of independence and freedom. Vika said she likes being around adults all day, where she learns “responsibility and independence, and learning to do things on my own.” And Gigi added that at work, “people don’t really think I’m 15. They think I’m an adult, which is kind of nice because it shows how mature you are.” She quickly added, “it’s nice to be an adult part time, but not full time,” to more laughs.

All three also mentioned that they had applied to Cristo Rey De La Salle because it was a new school. “We can mold the school into what we want the school to be,” Zach said. For these students that means finding a way to balance corporate job, school work and the community service work that Mr. Trinidad says the school wants to make an intrinsic part of the student experience. And all three of them have visions of how the school can grow.


Vika recently started a cultural appreciation club. Zach mentioned wanting more sports. And Gigi said she could already feel the school growing and changing. “Last year was kind of a testing year. And as we get older, there’ll be more dances and more sports, and a lot more jobs.” Mr. Trinidad says one way the school is trying to avoid the social hierarchy of class year is by creating what the school calls the Casa system, through which the students are sort-

ed into houses similar to the model used in the Harry Potter books. Each Casa has a patron saint, including St. John Baptiste de La Salle (for the Christian Brothers), St. Elizabeth of Hungary (to honor the school’s history), St. Kateri Tekakwitha (to honor First Nations peoples) and St. Oscar Romero (for social justice and the Americas). This system mixes students from different classes together to help build friendships between students of different ages.


When I asked the students how the Cristo Rey model of working would serve them in college, Gigi brought up maturity again. She had worked full time over the summer, and her boss told her that most of the teens in the office “just look at their feet and are very shy.” Talking to Cristo Rey students, in contrast, “was like talking to adults; it’s like talking to your friend,” her boss said. Zach says he has learned computer skills in the office and now wants to be a graphic designer. Vika says, “I love math; I enjoy numbers” and is thinking of pursuing work in STEM or business.

All three of them say that they feel a big difference between their situation and that of friends at other high schools in terms of the support they get. “We have mentors every day,” Gigi explains about the volunteers who work with the students, “and they help us get things organized.”





In Oakland, 100 percent of students at Cristo Rey De La Salle are students of color.



The mentors help with assignments, organizing calendars and study strategies. Zach says having supportive teachers who have gone through some of the same life challenges as the kids (the teaching staff is deliberately ethnically diverse, and many are from the Bay Area) helps as well.

Mr. Trinidad admits that it can be difficult to attract and retain teachers at a new school. The difficulty of offering competitive salaries is one reason for this, but the danger of burnout is another, something he is aware is a risk for himself as well. Spiritual care for students is mostly in the hands of staff and teachers. The school has a part-time campus minister, who also teaches Catholic studies full time; and the campus is adjacent to the large, busy parish of St. Elizabeth's as well as to St. Elizabeth's elementary school.

When I visited, one of the Christian Brothers was volunteering at the front desk, greeting and talking with students; another was visiting and sitting in on classes. A recent college grad working full-time as a Lasallian volunteer (a program similar to the Jesuit Volunteer Corps) showed me around a classroom where the archives from St. Elizabeth's school have been made into a kind of mini-museum, where alumni and visitors can learn about the history of the school and the neighborhood. Reflecting the larger history of Catholic schools in the United States and demographic shifts in the Bay Area, the class photos on the walls went from all white through most of the 20th century until the 1970s to exclusively students of color ever since.

Another dimension of the Cristo Rey model involves building relationships with the local business community, which can be viewed with some suspicion by people in Oakland who are experiencing the effects of gentrification. But students do not just get tuition remittance from working; they also receive mentoring from corporate partners and the chance to build relationships in the business world,

which gives them an advantage over many of their peers. Corporate partners, in turn, get to work with students who come from backgrounds vastly different from those of many typical white collar workers. "Our desire for our students," Mr. Trinidad says, "is for them to go out into the world and make a difference." But in the challenging class divisions of the Bay Area, working with local corporate partners based in Oakland also means the students also have a chance to "make a difference in their own communities" and give something back to the city as well.

Everyone at Cristo Rey De La Salle talked about their visions for the school's future: higher enrollments, recruiting students, growing corporate partnerships and building bridges between the school and the city. But even in its beginning years, the school already feels like a home. At lunch, students sat together with teachers and staff around tables in a courtyard, and I recalled what a Dominican sister who lives in Fruitvale once told me about the neighborhood. She had come there because she saw beyond the crime and graffiti and neglect to the people who lived there and the families who sent their children to school there. "To me," she said, "Fruitvale is the kingdom of God."

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WHY NOT CLASSICAL

The church's educational heritage is at stake.

During each of the past two summers, I have conducted a daylong seminar with administrators and teachers of a Catholic parish school who are adopting a classical curriculum and culture. And last summer I helped run a weeklong seminar with teachers from various schools in a Catholic diocese whose bishop is aiming to infuse his schools with a more classical character. Courage and joy permeated these seminars—courage to “think outside the

box,” to cut against the grain of the ruling conventions regarding elementary and high school education; and joy that arises spontaneously when teachers realize they are building themselves up in a manner that enables them to nourish their beloved students with wholesome food for mind and heart. As for myself? Simply put, I’ve been humbled and inspired by their courage and joy.

A recurring question I have asked myself, especially

EDUCATION?

By Matthew D. Walz

A student reads in the amphitheater of the ancient Greek city of Termessos.



right after a lively discussion during one of these seminars, is: Why not classical education? It is a question that I, as a Catholic, address in my imagination primarily to bishops and those in the church who determine curricula and influence the culture of Catholic schools—although I consider it a question that anyone dissatisfied with the current state of elementary and high school education might ask.

There is a growing conviction among many educators that implementing a classical educational model, little by little and step by step, is the way to go. It has found a home in a host of private, religiously affiliated

schools across the country, and it has spread more expansively by means of public charter schools, especially in states like Arizona and Texas whose state legislatures are friendly to such endeavors. What perplexes me, though, is not why Catholic diocesan schools are at the back of the line in the classical education movement, but why they aren't at its very head.

Indeed, given the depressing statistics about the decline of Catholic education in our country, this is a puzzle. After all, the church's own educational heritage is at stake.

Classical education encourages teachers and students to put current cultural standards to the test.

A Challenging Transition

When I introduce myself to administrators and teachers at these seminars, I thank them for permitting me to play a role in an important development—perhaps, in fact, a necessary survival tactic—in the life of their school. They have made the brave decision to dive headlong into the waters of classical education, waters that are ultimately refreshing but that may feel chilly at first. For them to adopt a classical model is to cast out into the deep, the unfamiliar, perhaps even the off-putting, but to do so with the confidence that they will be responding to their educational vocations more authentically.

They will have to learn about the trivium and the quadrivium. They will need to rethink their approach to mathematics and the natural sciences. They will have to read new books and perhaps memorize a lot of poetry. Indeed, over time, they may need to become classically educated themselves. So yes, these administrators and teachers can find the transition challenging but also invigorating and life-changing.

That they find it challenging is unsurprising. Providing a liberal, classical education has always been a challenge. It always cuts against the grain; it is always countercultural. This is because it invites students and teachers to search for standards that exist beyond those of the given culture in which they live. Classical education encourages teachers and students, therefore, to put current cultural standards to the test. Such a process can be painful, perhaps even disillusioning.

Given the state of contemporary culture, moreover, we may sense that imparting a classical education to our students is more difficult than ever before. Whether this sense is accurate or not, one thing is true: It has been and will remain difficult, because defaulting to more utilitarian, culture-conforming modes of education constantly lurks as a temptation.

Reinvigorating Education

While finding the move to a classical model challenging, these same administrators and teachers are happily

surprised by how reinvigorating it is. Indeed, classical education has always been reinvigorating for teachers and students alike. The reason is simple: A classical education aims to be a human education, period—as full a human education as one can manage. In other words, it engages students and teachers in every dimension of their existence, at every level of their humanity—spiritual, intellectual, moral, psychological, emotional and physical.

Or, to make the same point differently, a classical education puts students and teachers in touch with the whole of reality in its truth, goodness and beauty. Thus it is integrative; it unites students and teachers in their shared humanness, enabling them to engage the wholeness of human experience and, therefore, to become more whole themselves. It also reveals that what is true is good and beautiful, and that what is good is beautiful and true.

To clarify the distinctive qualities of classical education, it helps to contrast it with aspects of the elementary and high school education usually offered nowadays. To do so requires generalizing, of course, and thus painting something of a caricature of the current condition of conventional elementary and high school education. Still, the contrast illuminates classical education against the backdrop of the ruling educational culture, not to mention the economic, moral and political climate out of which conventional education has arisen and within which it persists.

Education in Three Dimensions

Simply put, conventional education is flat; it has become two-dimensional. Conventional education attempts, on the one hand, to transfer (perhaps “download”?) information to students for the sake of passing tests and, on the other, to produce skills in students for the sake of getting a job. Such activities are not humane—nor, it turns out, even very human.

What is information, after all? What are skills? Information is mere truth, naked truth—which usually means the ugly truth. Along similar lines, skills are mere arts, naked arts—which usually means tedious arts. Skills are arts bereft of virtue because they have been separated from the discipline of contemplation.

By contrast, classical education enables students and teachers to garner information and skills within their proper and elevating contexts. Students and teachers alike, as human beings, are called to seek beauty-clothed truth that calls them to goodness and to develop virtue-infused arts that grow out of contemplation.

It is no wonder, then, that students and teachers alike respond to the high calling of classical education. It fans

that divine spark within each of us, that potent image of God stamped deeply in our souls. Teachers know, at least implicitly, that students are called to something greater than merely passing standardized tests and finding a place in the workaday world. Students themselves also know, at least implicitly, that they are called to something greater. And so when the students whom teachers are blessed to teach ask for bread, teachers ought not to give them stones; they ought, rather, to give them real, wholesome bread. And when students ask teachers for a fish, they ought not to give them a snake; they ought, rather, to give them real fish.

At Home in the Church

I daresay, moreover, that a Catholic context is the one in which classical education is most at home. This is not to say, of course, that the church invented such an education. Historically speaking, that is simply not true. One need only read Plato's *Republic* to learn this. Yet classical education finds its fulfillment in a Catholic context—a context framed by faith, hope and charity, a context in which students and teachers encounter Christ both sacramentally and in one another. For in a Catholic context, reason, strengthened by classical education, can be paired with faith and the support of the sacraments, and together these two wings bear us toward the contemplation of truth, helping us to achieve the full truth of our very selves.

Two years ago we celebrated the 20th anniversary of St. John Paul II's "Fides et Ratio," an encyclical written to demonstrate the "necessary relationship" between faith and reason. Faith and reason complement each other. Faith sets the sights and aspirations of education higher than Plato could ever have imagined, while the exercise of reason in relation to faith helps to keep our feet on the ground, so that what we believe remains humanly fulfilling and neither stands in opposition to our nature nor suppresses it.

This complementarity between faith nourished by the sacraments and reason enhanced by classical education mirrors the relationship between the divinity and humanity of Jesus Christ. We believe, of course, that Christ is fully divine and fully human. In Christ there is no "compromise" between divinity and humanity. To be sure, divinity and humanity remain distinct in Christ, and yet they permeate each other and embrace each other. The same can be said about the Catholic faith and classically educated reason: They also permeate and embrace each other.

We find ourselves in odd, disconcerting times. One odd aspect of our times is this: It can be maintained, very plausibly, that the greatest defender of reason over at least the

past half-century has been the church itself. As the world continues to trust less and less in reason's ability to know truth, to be objective and to escape the snares of relativism and nihilism, the church has become the staunch defender of reason. The church has maintained that, yes, we human beings can know truth and be objective, and thus we should stand up in witness against the dictatorship of relativism and nihilism.

To be sure, the church has always expressed an innate trust in reason; this has been part and parcel of the Catholic intellectual tradition from its inception. After all, like all else, reason was created by God, and thus is good.

Reason Made Flesh

In recent years, however, our innate trust in reason has had to become more explicit, owing to the many voices encouraging us toward skepticism regarding truth, reason and tradition. So the church reminds us that reason is not limited to just the scientific method and the development of technology. No, reason includes within its scope anything and everything that can be studied intelligently, anything and everything open to human investigation. This includes, of course, mathematics and the natural sciences, but also languages, history, psychology, arts and music, literature, politics, philosophy and theology.

The church's trust in reason is buttressed by belief in God and all that the Son of God revealed by becoming flesh. Not only did God create reason, but also the Word, Logos, Reason itself, was made flesh and dwelt among us. Thereby God upheld in the most dramatic and explicit way the dignity of human reason and its ability to discover truth.

It is incumbent upon the church and its shepherds, then, to help students to see this, to see that there is nothing to fear when pursuing truth. At this moment, I know no better way to do so than to run to the head of the line, courageously and joyfully, in the advancing movement of classical education. Thereby the church will help the young encounter truth, good truth, beautifully good truth, graced by a vision of the whole of creation and its redemption that Christ alone grants. Thereby, too, the church will provide the young neither with a stone nor a snake, but with bread, real bread, wholesome bread, fresh-baked loaves. And the church will provide fish, real fish, healthy fish.

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Through Locked Doors



An encounter with the startling prayer life of Søren Kierkegaard

By Karen Wright Marsh

*Where am I? Who am I?
How did I come to be here?
What is this thing called the world?
How did I come into the world?
Why was I not consulted?
And if I am compelled to take part in it, where is the director?
I want to see him.*

—Søren Kierkegaard (1813–55)

As a role model for future generations of angst, overwrought people, Søren Kierkegaard does not disappoint. The “father of existentialism” puzzles us with philosophical texts, disorients us with his interrogations of fear and trembling, overwhelms us with 800 pages of either and or and dazzles us with quotes like “Anxiety is the dizziness of freedom.” But some of his most important lessons came when he knelt to pray.

I recently picked up a battered 1956 copy of *The Prayers of Kierkegaard* in a dusty bookshop. Standing in the aisle, I was startled to read words both direct and intimate: “Teach me, O God, not to make a martyr of myself through stifling reflection. Teach me to breathe deeply in faith.” Lately, I have felt that tug in my chest, a twist of uneasiness below the surface of things. Reading Søren’s prayer now, I take one full breath. In and out.

Søren did not make his name on the merits of a dynam-

ic public prayer life. In his own time, the existentialist philosopher rambled for hours through the charming streets and hidden passages of Copenhagen, stopping to talk with random folks along the way. Everyone in town recognized the spindly, comical figure whose tousled hair stuck up nearly six inches from his forehead.

Søren’s brilliant, caustic wit was admired all over. You would not have guessed that behind the roving, familiar figure with top hat and walking cane there was a melancholy fellow trying to know and solve the deep riddles of life. He held a great deal inside, determined to understand himself before he could know anything else—including God. Even as an outwardly vivacious youngster, Søren always kept his true feelings concealed. When he wrote of his childhood later, he described himself as an intense boy in the power of a “monstrously brooding temperament,” a child who played a pitiful game: to keep everyone from guessing how secretly unhappy he really was.

It was no picnic to be the youngest of Michael Kierkegaard’s seven children. Søren’s haunted, pietistic father was convinced that their family was cursed. Michael gloomily predicted that all of his children would die tragically by 33, Jesus’ age at his crucifixion. Old man Kierkegaard took his kids on treks to the cemetery, where he exhorted them to dwell on the agonies of Christ and meditate on their own horrific sins. No wonder little Søren was filled with dread.



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Unfinished sketch of Søren Kierkegaard, by his cousin Niels Christian Kierkegaard, c. 1840


iStock

The Richelieu Library, Paris





Søren was convinced that his individual relationship with God was a radical choice. As he put it, faith is an either-or. It is either God or—well, the rest does not matter.



The Search for Self

As he grew older, the teenage Søren was both repelled by and attracted to his father's fierce Lutheran faith. He wrestled with faith as a theology student at the University of Copenhagen. As Søren began thinking for himself, the weighty old orthodox Christian dogma cracked and shifted. What options were left to him then? A punishing, wrathful avenger or a respectable, distant deity—could either God be true? And what did any divine being have to do with him and his small life? Søren looked to philosophy as a way to slip the snares of religion.

I have always liked philosophy: ancient Greeks pondering the nature of reality; German idealists and French postmodernists; logic, with its axioms and arguments; thought experiments to sharpen my mind. In fact, words attributed to Aristotle are posted over my desk—for example, “It is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it.” I do not stay up at night worrying over concepts, but I do enjoy philosophy for the healthy intellectual workout.

Søren took philosophizing far more to heart; his was a high-stakes search. Stalking the alleys of Copenhagen, occupied by interior puzzling, he was plagued by the personal problem of purpose. In the pages of his journal, 17-year-old Søren wrote, “What I really lack is to be clear in my mind what I am to do, not what I am to know.” He was after an intellectual understanding that would enliven his existence in the world—one grand passion to comprehend his essential self, to know truth that was true for him, to find the idea for which he could live and die.

Found by God

Søren's melancholy deepened as philosophy failed to bear the weight of his all-encompassing quest for meaning. Still, he struggled on, hoping it would not prove to be a dead end. As for theology, Søren could not shake his suspicion that beyond abstract religious dogma there actually was a divine reality: the person of Jesus, who would demand a startling commitment. But at the unwelcome prospect of a full spiritual conversion that would surely offend his reason and clash with his emotions, Søren determined to try everything else before he became “seriously a Christian.” If Jesus held a radical cure, it was not a medicine he was prepared to take—not yet.

One Sunday, Søren read the Gospel story of the disciples who, frightened at their teacher's crucifixion, took refuge in an upper room. Søren felt much like them, conflicted and scared, at once relentlessly seeking the divine, studying theology and even reading Scripture and yet hiding out from the living God. The disciples were taken completely by surprise when Jesus showed up saying, “Peace be with you.” If Jesus was going to get to him, too, Søren realized, it would only be through firmly locked doors. And yet, unexpectedly, that is just what the risen Jesus did. On May 19, 1838, Søren had a decisive spiritual experience, a feeling of “indescribable joy” that was inexplicable to his rational mind. In that mysterious moment, the young man arrived at his life's central truth at last—the realization that, at his core, he was a person found by God.

The young man who had long examined belief from an intellectual distance, standing outside it, now threw himself into an inward, ardent Christianity. Søren was convinced that his individual relationship with God was a radical choice. As he put it, faith is an either-or. It is either God or—well, the rest does not matter. Choose what you will, but if you choose anything other than God, you lose out; both you and your choices are lost. Søren embraced faith as a passion, a leap to live life in its fullest sense.

A Radical Leap

The newly committed Søren wanted to bear witness to Jesus Christ but not, he said, in the way of the “parsons' trash” peddled by his own self-satisfied state church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark, an institution that counted all Danish citizens as automatic Christians from birth. Thoughtless piety made him want to scream. Søren disdained the complacent neighbors who were no better than baptized pagans, oblivious to sincere, transformative spirituality.

And so, out to provoke the bored religious folks around him, Søren became a kind of literary prankster. He wrote aesthetic, philosophical and polemical volumes, journal essays and popular newspaper articles. Leafing through his collected works, the philosopher in me wanders along, playing the philosophy game. It does not take long to get lost in Søren's complex writings on subjective truth, objective truth, dread, existence, irony. My attention fails me.

Then Søren surprises with a jab. Don't just be a Christian, he says, as if "Christian" is some assigned label that you are simply stuck with forever, an identity that means nothing to you. No, take all of your life to become a Christian: Choose, again and again with each new day, to be a real self, an authentic person in relation to God. Abandon your calculated safety for a reckless, wholehearted life of faith in Christ. Continue to become. Grow. Risk. Take that radical leap of faith right now.

Sometimes I presume my faith, as if I were a smug Christian, detached and drifting in and out of convinced belief in God. My spirit floats somewhere beyond the embodied decisions I make in everyday life. The vital energy that wakes me up in the morning is spent on temporary tasks and immediate concerns, heedless of the demanding Jesus who waits at the locked door of my heart. My deeper impulses doze, sometimes undetectable.

Person of Prayer

How will my soul wake up to the risky joy of authentic faith? It is the anguished, struggling Søren who shows me the path into unreserved living—mind, body and soul, fully aware. I learn that once Søren experienced the faith that reached beyond abstract knowledge, it was the practice of prayer that kindled his inner transformation. "The function of prayer is not to influence God," he said, "but rather to change the nature of the one who prays." Growing into a fervent person of prayer with living faith as his aim, Søren's daily encounters with the eternal became as essential to him as breathing.

It is no surprise that we do not all know the devotional side of Søren. Renowned as a celebrity poet, critic, agitator and philosopher, he was reserved about his own private devotional life. Even as he was perfectly comfortable ranting against the national church or dashing off clever magazine editorials, he confessed that baring the intimacies of his life with God was "so difficult, so difficult."

I wonder if Søren felt the way I sometimes do—that while my public Christian self can lead Bible studies and discuss theology, I am at the same time oddly hesitant to speak

about my raw, honest connection with God. That might seem strange to the many forthright people who open their faithful hearts to anyone who will listen. I resonate with Søren as he reflects on his personal spiritual life: "My inwardness is too true for me to be able to talk about it."

Prayer, Søren's ongoing conversation with God, became the source of his greatest earthly happiness. Søren likens prayer to a gyroscope, a practice that balances him come what may. Happily for you and me, he recorded his prayers in a journal. On those pages, Søren speaks frankly to God of his questions, confidence, doubts, joys, pains, consolation, suffering, love, longing, depression. It is all there. And finally he arrives at gratitude. "It is wonderful how God's love overwhelms me," he writes. There is no truer prayer than the one Søren utters over and over: the prayer of thanks to God for doing so indescribably much more than he had ever expected.

The morning I discovered his prayers, I was swept up into the urgent. (This surge of anxiety: Is it a sign of freedom? I doubt it.) Big thoughts of purpose were pushed aside. Quiet, leisurely devotion would be a luxury. Just as restless Søren always kept moving, I, too, dash through many miles each day. But before I do, Søren's wise words come to me: "The best help in all action is to pray; that is true genius. Then one never goes wrong." Leave it to an existentialist philosopher to pull me back into the present moment.

No longer a caricature of the brooding, angst-ridden intellectual, Søren prompts us to take down the coffee-stained volume of 100 prayers and approach God in his company. "Father in Heaven!" we begin. "Help us never forget that You are love. This conviction will triumph in our hearts, even if the coming day brings inquietude, anxiety, fright or distress."

Soul brother Søren, so traumatized by his father's fearful fundamentalist religion, was once found by a great divine love. Now he urges us to take the risk and go deeper, to fling ourselves into God's presence—and know the one good, unshakeable thing in life.

Karen Wright Marsh is the executive director of *Theological Horizons* at the University of Virginia and author of *Vintage Sinners and Saints: 25 Christians Who Transformed My Faith*, from which this essay is adapted. She is the host of the "Vintage Saints and Sinners" podcast.



A Visceral Faith

The cinema of Abel Ferrara

By Patrick Preziosi

You would be hard pressed to find a new Abel Ferrara film at a movie theater not attached to a film festival. You would be in a similar dilemma if you tried to find the films that bookend the director's commercial (though not his artistic) peak on any sort of streaming service. The uniformly excellent "Bad Lieutenant" (1992) and "King of New York" (1990) are two of the director's easy-to-track-down

films. As for equally great films, such as "The Blackout" (1997) or his pilot for the Michael Mann-produced TV series "Crime Story" (1986), Ferrara has taken to telling fans to search for them on the "dark web."

Beyond the frustration of not being able to engage with such a rich and consistently challenging filmography, it is simply maddening that films featuring such revered screen types as

Christopher Walken, Isabella Rossellini, Harvey Keitel, Willem Dafoe and even Madonna are sequestered in legal limbo. It is a mark of Ferrara's status as a master of his medium that so many are willing to forgo more lucrative opportunities to work with the director.

The Ferrara drought was alleviated momentarily last May by the Museum of Modern Art in New York, which



It can be hard to stomach the viscosity of Abel Ferrara's cinematic language, especially when you consider how much of himself is traceable across his company of addicts and gangsters.

ality of Ferrara's cinematic language, especially when you consider how much of himself is traceable across his company of addicts, gangsters and recovering alcoholics.

Of course, Ferrara has never been a stranger to self-reflective filmmaking. His earlier work situates itself within the New York milieu his Italian-Irish and Catholic upbringing in the Bronx—and a brief stint in pornography (to pay the bills that go with being a young filmmaker)—would have exposed him to. This biography can cause film buffs to reflexively compare Ferrara to Martin Scorsese (also Italian, and in his case, *still* Catholic, while Ferrara converted to Buddhism in the mid 2000s), and slap the subsequent films with the tags of exploitation or pulp. Side-stepping hyperbole, Dennis Lim concisely summed up Ferrara as the “unofficial poet laureate of pre-Giuliani New York.” Though Ferrara's films take on many forms, all come with the innate desire to simply *portray* New York City, all forms of commentary coming second.

Ferrara's directorial vision isn't inextricably tied to New York, however. As the director has decamped to different locales—from California to Rome—his films have followed, demonstrating how thematic concerns can be informed by all sorts of locations, and vice versa. But the most consistent and traceable through-line in Ferrara's work isn't necessarily one of subject matter—he has long since moved past the B-movie, N.Y.C.-indebted machinations of his earlier work—but of characters, namely those experiencing faith on a visceral, sometimes unquantifiable level.

Choosing to depict moments of faith in both crisis and transcendence is working on well-trodden ground; presenting faith as a more enigmatic and very much visceral entity is what sets Ferrara apart, and possibly what has distinguished him as a cult figure. Other filmmakers who are known to grapple with questions of faith still provide easy entry points. For Scorsese, it's Catholic guilt; for Ingmar Bergman, the silence of God; for Terrence Malick, it's faith as a redemptive force.

Ferrara is not interested in concise portrayals, but those that are rendered with a kind of stomach-churning uncertainty, allowing for moments of proof of the divine as well as the exact opposite. In a typical move, he transplants the story of Jesus to a New York gangster in “King of New York,” freshly released from prison, whose attempts to do good are hounded by local police and undermined by betrayals. Ultimately, he sacrifices himself, dying in the back of a yellow cab with a bullet in his belly, the driver's rear-view mirror rosary in view.

Or take one of the purest distillations of the Ferrara ethos, “Bad Lieutenant.” Harvey Keitel, in a performance of pure nerves, grunts, tears and drug use, is the unnamed lieutenant., the very definition of a crooked cop, more than happy to steal evidence bags of coke, take bets on the '91 Mets and harass teenage girls, flaunting his badge and authority as a means of doing so. He is also a Catholic and attends Mass; when his go-between for baseball betting outlines the increasingly dangerous situation the lieutenant is embroiled in, he replies simply with, “No one can kill me, I'm

presented a complete retrospective, “Abel Ferrara: Unrated.” For this to be a truly comprehensive series, prints of the films were outsourced from France (where Ferrara remains more respected than in his native United States) and from the director's personal collection. Given a prime chance to burrow even further into Ferrara's work, one could affirm his singularity. It can be hard to stomach the viscer-

Ferrara is not interested in concise portrayals, but those that are rendered with a kind of stomach-churning uncertainty. ●●

blessed. I'm a f— Catholic." He then places another bet on the Dodgers beating the Mets, which proves to be a death sentence.

There is the faint promise of some sort of course correction when the lieutenant begins investigating the brutal rape of a nun in Spanish Harlem, which is paralleled with a further descent into debauchery, suggesting a spiritual faith thrown into turmoil. The lieutenant comes to represent an approach to Catholic teaching that Ferrara described as: "It's not that you're pushed to read the Bible. The Bible is read to you." Religion, in Ferrara's view, should not be oversimplified and couched in exclusively negative or positive terms.

We can assume the lieutenant is a Catholic in this simplified mode, identifying initially halfheartedly—from the opening scene in which he is yelling at his twin boys, and then bumping coke, he is shown as anything but benevolent—but then accepting his religion on its own, visceral ground. When the nun is raped, this event contradicts his ideas of a divine protection (the "no one can kill me" comment), and his ideas of religion are now placed in a sort of battleground, ideas of forgiveness and sacrifice crashing into one another and forming new, unfamiliar shapes.

The lieutenant only truly engages with Catholicism in a similarly spoken-

taneous way, collapsing in the aisle of the crime scene's church, screaming at an apparition of Jesus for answers on how to continue, on what to do. What in fact he wishes to continue, we are not exactly sure. Is he asking how to proceed with the case? Is he asking for more general guidance as his life continues on its downward spiral? What we can be sure of is that it is a sudden and explicit acknowledgement of faith, much more believable than the past assertion of being Catholic and therefore bulletproof.

"Bad Lieutenant" is Ferrara's most straightforward depiction of a malleable faith, one that hits on a gut level. From there, the director would forgo explicit references to faith in favor of subtle implications of Catholic themes. Many characters are still Catholic—such as the Italian-American family at the center of "The Funeral" (1996)—but they are not exactly collapsing in pews, shrieking at Jesus.

"The Funeral" creates an air of discomfiting forgiveness and vengeance that speaks to the family's religion, as well as the life-or-death circumstances of a criminal family that are created in such a milieu. As the Tempios cope with the killing of their youngest brother, Giovanni (Vincent Gallo), the reactions of the family members create an atmosphere of visceral tension, where, as in "Bad

Lieutenant," different Catholic ideals seem to bash into one another rather than coexist. Raimundo (Christopher Walken) is in a state of sober resignation and subsequent acceptance, and even borderline-reconciliation with the killer. Cesarino (a firebrand Chris Penn), however, is caught in a feedback loop of religious guilt and a desire for vengeance that pushes him to shoot his own brother and then take his own life at the end of the film. Toeing the line between faith and familial debt proves to be too much.

Ferrara would continue to subtly nod to Catholic iconography and teachings in subsequent films, and even after his conversion to Buddhism in 2007, still acknowledged spirituality as an unknowable force. Even when the background of characters becomes less discernible, they still engage in moments of reconciliation, acceptance and forgiveness. As formal acknowledgements of faith became less of a concern, the Ferrara protagonist—undeniably a surrogate for the director himself, in his struggles with addiction and self-preservation—became one consistently trying to reckon with the past while doing right by the future. Whether it be the recovering screenwriter trying to understand his murder of a young girl in "The Blackout," or a corporate saboteur awash in the questionable memory of the buildup to a botched job in "New



Alamy

In Abel Ferrara's "Bad Lieutenant," Harvey Keitel is the very definition of a crooked cop.

Rose Hotel" (1998), these characters still place themselves at the mercy of a higher, inscrutable force in order to better understand their own lives.

In his chamber piece, "4:44 Last Day On Earth" (2011), Ferrara provides a snapshot of a New York City couple spending their last hours in their Lower East Side apartment, waiting for the end of the world to occur at the titular time. Engaging in numerous coping mechanisms, from meditation to sex, the two come to embody an acceptance of the malleability of faith, pledging themselves not just to religion, but to each other, to art, to

friends and family. This is heralded by the visceral nature of the situation—the promise of a literal rapture brings out repressed behaviors in many. But by pairing these moments with moments of surprisingly idyllic calm, Ferrara positions himself not just as one to grasp the sheer overwhelming concept of faith, but also as someone who can explore how it expands from there.

Ferrara's first feature film, "The Driller Killer," begins with a man played by Ferrara himself bolting from a church where he has come across his estranged father. Ferrara's entire ca-

reer has carried itself in a similar way ever since: capturing the moments where, for either better or worse, our concepts of faith collide and are disrupted.

Patrick Preziosi is a freelance critic from Brooklyn, N.Y. He is a regular contributor to Electric Ghost Magazine and Ultra Dogme and has also written for photogénie, Metrograph Edition, Little White Lies and Screen Slate.

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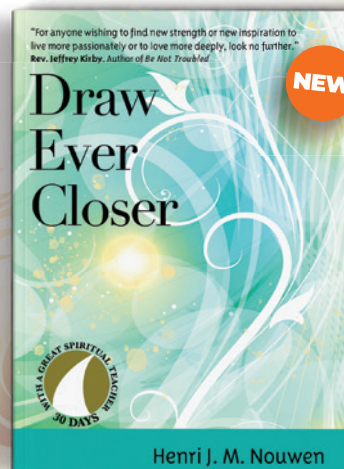
Post-Modern Prayer

By Nicholas Samaras

Please, let me be lonely.
Let me get away enough
to actually miss something,
to yearn blue for someone.
Let me leave the inundation
long enough to be able to breathe.
Give me downtime to reflect
and not react. I'm tired
of the world's incessant
buzz and scrutiny, the news
and the news of the news,
the onslaught. Let me leave.
Let me live in yellow days
without people. Let me
walk in my own home
without tension screaming.
A green forest filled
with nothing but trees
is an antidepressant.
Let me breathe pine and hours
of solitude long enough
to reacquaint myself
with myself, without demand,
accusation, the jobs nobody
values. Let me be coloured
with absence, this prayer
to be missing from my own life.

Nicholas Samaras was born in Patmos, Greece, and raised in the United States. His most recent book is *American Psalm*, World Psalm (Ashland Poetry Press, 2014). His work has appeared in *The New Yorker*, *Poetry* and other publications.

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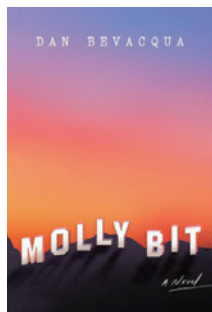

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Look at the stars. Look how they shine for you.

By John W. Miller

iStock



Molly Bit

By Dan Bevacqua
Simon & Schuster
320p \$26

Celebrities are suns. They burn brighter as we gaze in orbit around their flash, flare and fury.

Who are these people? They are humans with souls, and their lives are fragile, capable of joyful peace and awful anguish, redemption and destruction. How one of this species—a Hollywood movie star—rises and falls is the topic of Dan Bevacqua's debut novel, the darkly comic *Molly Bit*.

Our heroine, born in the mid-1970s, seems to be reared as part of the American middle class. Her dad is a soil tester from Vermont. But

the family struggles with money. Her stepfather pays her tuition. Friends buy lunch. When Molly has debts, a theater director who has been creepy toward her pays them off. When Molly starts acting school in Boston, she has never been anywhere outside of Vermont. Certainly not California, where she will become a movie star. It is her destiny.

Molly is blessed with three essential weapons. She is one of the “beautiful people.” She is disciplined, waiting tables and diligently auditioning instead of starring at cocaine parties. And she is a pro: Acting really is her vocation. She feels “the acute pang of the professional, where it feels as if no one else in the entire world but you is bothering to do their job.” She knows to care about the work—a good lesson we can never learn often enough—and it pays off.

That sets her apart in college, where celebrity trumps craft. Actors

“wanted fame so bad it pained them in their hearts when they tried to fall asleep at night,” Bevacqua writes in the first paragraph of the book. “It was like the thought of not getting famous killed them, or like the way they longed for it was a sort of murder, but of themselves, and if they didn’t get famous, they might die right there in their beds.”

Our movie star is ambitious financially as well as artistically: She does not “get off” on the idea of being art poor.” Bevacqua is hard on the kids Molly goes to school with, the ones who went “to Alaska and the previous summer and PA’d on a documentary about Inuit tribes and then acted like it was the first time in the whole history of the world anybody had ever done that.”

I felt compassion for these acting students suffering through exaggerated versions of a modern digital life. If you have a Facebook, Instagram or Twitter account, you’re managing your image just like one of these Hol-

lywood aspirants, even if you are not going to auditions to compete against actors who are “white, five-ten and perfect” while R.E.M.’s “Shiny Happy People” plays from the loudspeakers.

Acting culture is easier to convey visually and it has often been satirized on TV in shows, like “Slings & Arrows,” “30 Rock” and “Barry,” or in movies like “Singin’ in the Rain,” “Sunset Boulevard” and “The Artist.” The literary canon includes some good novels, led by Nathanael West’s *The Day of the Locust*, but it’s a trickier story to tell if you can’t show actors acting. Playing with that handicap, Bevacqua’s debut is a success, and he hits his best notes when he focuses on California, where Molly heads after college.

Bay Area people, she discovers, are hard to recognize. “She couldn’t tell if Mr. Ponytail was a hippie or a dot.com billionaire. She didn’t know if the nerd in the Polo worked for a think tank or Pixar.” In Los Angeles, at least, “people lied to you up front about what they claimed to do.” Molly prefers the company of comedians, who aren’t as earnest.

Molly is not addicted to celebrity. She might love acting, but she hates audiences. “If anything, she used her charm to keep people at a distance. She used it to get jobs.” What Molly wants is an “old fame.” She was born in the 1970s and “had to learn what .www was. She’d had to invent a reason to be looked at. It hadn’t been invented for her. She wasn’t famous because she’d taken a picture of herself with her phone.”

The route to fame is anchored by Molly’s 14-hour days and vocational confidence: She “thought she was the best actress in Hollywood. All she needed was a break.” She gets them:

breakthrough roles, commercials in Japan, a Vanity Fair spread declaring her the “Girl of the Future.”

Bevacqua nails the Hollywood archetypes in all their silliness. There’s the rapey middle-age directors, “the last traces of their wonder-boy charm evaporating off them, the pressures of the marketplace and various drug habits having wrinkled them into a sudden old age.” And the actors: A woman baptized “The Nun” is a “part-time Scientologist and a quarter-time mother to three adopted Senegalese children.” At the Golden Globes, when the cameras pick her up talking to Robert Duvall, she moves her lips silently so as not to look boring. “What are you saying?” Duvall asks.

“The Legend,” with four Oscars to her name, lives on a farm in upstate New York with horses she ships to Florida in the winter. Her partner is a photographer who asks his neighbors if he can shoot them in the shower.

When Molly calls a child actor, the girl is performing Chekhov in New York. Nominated for a big award, the girl tells Molly that if she wins, her manager has told her to “conceive of this as a footnote” to her career. “If anything, this could be a hindrance.... Do I want my life ruined by drug addiction? Do I succumb to that tragic narrative? Or do I aspire to something more?”

It is Molly’s fate to ascend to the top of this pyramid of insanity. Her life is not ruined by drug addiction. She keeps her head on her shoulders, and thinks for herself, even telling a journalist that 80 percent of white people in America are racist, causing her publicist to end the interview.

But it is not a normal life. She travels in a Land Rover with a Red Sox

cap pulled down over her eyes. Surrounded by an eager crowd, she knows not to look at them. “To look at even one of them, to stare into the lens, had felt similar to bad luck, or, worse, as if a curse had been put upon her.”

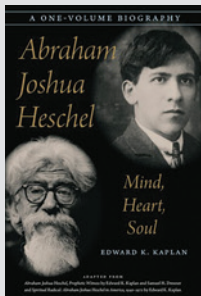
In Venice, she has to appear at a store where the first 300 fans will get her autograph. Boats full of paparazzi follow her. The New Yorker shows up for an interview. When she marries a second time, it is to a film director who cheats on her with a young actress. “Their marriage had to be reestablished every two or three months, when they actually saw each other.” The rest of the time, “he didn’t seem real.” She gets divorced and dates younger men, attracting the interest of the tabloids.

In the end, Molly is destroyed. How exactly is too big a spoiler to reveal here, but it is big. Movie stardom might be your destiny, but it does not solve your problems.

As a friend tells her:

You’re floating around out there. You’re not a person. Or you sort of are. Half of you is in limbo, or wherever. You know when somebody dies? It’s like that. No one knows what to say. There’s no frame of reference. It’s this unspoken thing, and then all of a sudden it appears. That’s what it’s like to be a famous person. Expect awkwardness. Expect the weirdest, strangest s—.

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



Abraham Joshua Heschel
Mind, Heart, Soul
 By Edward K. Kaplan
 University of Nebraska Press
 488p \$34.95

From anguish to hope

I have been reading the works of Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel for years, gaining deeper appreciation and understanding of a few of his best-known works, including *The Prophets*, *The Sabbath* and *God in Search of Man*. I was familiar with the general timeline of Heschel's life but did not know some of the details of his struggles and his contributions, particularly on issues of social justice and ecumenical dialogue. In *Abraham Joshua Heschel: Mind, Heart, Soul*, Edward K. Kaplan not only tells the life story of this great scholar, but also captures the essence of the recurring themes in Heschel's greatest works.

Kaplan presents Heschel's life in three sections: "From Hasidism to Modernity," "Theological Foundations in America" and "Spiritual Activism." Readers may be surprised to learn of the interactions Heschel had with several significant historical figures, including Pope Paul VI, Elie Weisel, President John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr.

Part 1 draws the reader into the intense time when Heschel was finishing his dissertation in Berlin, working hard to have it published and looking to leave Germany for an academic position in the United States in the difficult years leading

up to World War II. The contradictory realities Heschel faced as he witnessed the destruction of the culture that influenced his spirit and thinking formed what Kaplan would call Heschel's "American mission."

In Part 2, Kaplan provides a summary of Heschel's scholarly work and a synopsis of some of the foundational principles of his writing. Heschel continually returns to his fundamental premise that God is in search of humanity. "Faith does not spring out of nothing," he writes. "It comes with the discovery of the holy dimension of our existence. Faith opens our hearts for the entrance of the Holy."

Part 3 provides an overview of Heschel's activism, which demonstrates his strength in the face of enormous challenges. Heschel played a major role in the creation and the eventual passage of the Second Vatican Council's "Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions" ("Nostra Aetate"), which would dramatically change how the Catholic Church viewed Judaism and treated Jews. The tension surrounding Heschel's papal audience is palpable in Kaplan's account.

The combination of an absolutely fascinating life story and a brief review of some of Heschel's beautiful theological prose will captivate anyone looking for inspiration and a model for spiritual strength in difficult times.

Jennifer MacNeil has worked in information technology for over 25 years.



Revolution Française:
 Emmanuel Macron
 and the Quest to
 Reinvent a Nation
 By Sophie Pedder
 Bloomsbury
 Continuum
 320p \$28

The precocious politician

Revolution Française is not a biography in a strictly conventional sense, though it presents biographical elements. Rather, it is a contemporaneous report on the remarkable rise of Emmanuel Macron to the presidency of France in 2017 at the age of 39. His election was historic by many measures, particularly for his being the youngest elected president and for the fact that he won the office on his first try, when custom dictated that past presidents entered the Élysée on either their second or third attempts.

Written by Sophie Pedder, the Paris bureau chief of *The Economist*, this book is the result of many years observing the evolution of a most unlikely French leader: one whose experience was basically in intellectual pursuits, the civil service and investment banking.

Before she addresses Macron's entrance into public life, Pedder provides us with pertinent facts of his private life: He is married to a woman who is 25 years his senior (and his former high school teacher); he comes from a family of physicians (his parents, brother and sister are all doctors); and he was a precocious child, unusually intelligent and more self-possessed than his peers. To the consternation of

his parents, he credits his maternal grandmother's influences for his approach to life. Though modern in outlook, in some respects he is decidedly old-fashioned in his cultural tastes. While he grew up in a largely secular household, he requested to be baptized a Catholic at the age of 12 and went to a Jesuit secondary school in his hometown of Amiens (La Providence, popularly known as "La Pro"). When older, however, he described himself as an "agnostic Catholic."

Macron is unusual in that he approaches government from a different perspective. He came to power exactly 13 months after creating his own political party or movement, called En Marche ("Onward" or "On the Move" in English), and he operated it as if it were a start-up tech business venture. By mixing the traditional (door-to-door campaigning) with entrepreneurial techniques, he upended the political system; he entered office promising a fresh outlook and new approaches to old, intractable attitudes and problems.

As Pedder relates, Macron not only wants to "reform" France but to "transform" it. He wants to restore hope and confidence in a moribund society that is tied to its past, yet uncertain of the future. He seeks to put France back on the world stage, restored to *la gloire et la majesté*.

Joseph McAuley, *assistant editor*.



The Force of Nonviolence
An Ethico-Political Bind

By Judith Butler
Verso Books
204p \$24.95

A resource for pacifist thought

How do we define violence? Is war inevitable? What motivates us to preserve the life of someone else?

Questions like these appear frequently in *The Force of Nonviolence: An Ethico-Political Bind*, the latest work from the famed gender theorist and social philosopher Judith Butler. Arguing for a type of aggressive nonviolence, or "nonviolent forms of resistance [that] can and must be aggressively pursued," Butler ties together a campaign against violence with a campaign against social inequality.

After consulting a diverse array of philosophers, sociologists and psychoanalysts, Butler contends that through an understanding of interdependency—the way in which all people are connected to and dependent upon one another—we can understand the importance of preserving other's lives. She describes her goal as presenting how nonviolence "emerges as a meaningful concept precisely when destruction is most likely or seems most certain."

The Force of Nonviolence can make for challenging reading—long sentences, intersecting themes, difficult terminology. But this is to be expected, especially when a key issue is how "violence," the book's subject, eludes clear definition.

Throughout her work, Butler demonstrates how racism and "war logics" decide the lives of some people to be more important than others. Lives not considered "grievable" are rendered dispensable, labeled unworthy of defense.

Butler is not opposed to violent intervention in some circumstances, and she does not regard nonviolence as "an absolute principle." She argues that nonviolence is not the same as love and that we do not have to love others in order to adopt a pacifist position.

But if love is to mean "to will the good of the other," in the Thomistic sense, then surely this would be a prerequisite for a nonviolent ethos grounded in "radical equality." In Christian ethics, which often promotes nonviolence as a necessary response to the teachings of Christ, a radical love is not just an essential characteristic, but it is the method through which such nonviolence is made possible.

In addition to providing a scholarly, academic investigation and defense of nonviolence, Butler's work can also serve as a resource guide for pacifist thought. Butler also does not shy away from addressing current political concerns, including xenophobic rhetoric that demonizes asylum seekers. While the book allows for disagreement, it can also be read as a call to action, an intellectual *cri de coeur* that, instead of accepting current reality, suggests a transformation of reality for the betterment of society.

Ryan Di Corpo, *Joseph A. O'Hare, S.J., fellow*.



Finding connection in our fears

By Jim McDermott

Listening to “10 Things That Scare Me,” a podcast from WNYC, feels like being witness to little acts of self-liberation.

A few years ago, Paula Szuchman, a vice president at the public radio station WNYC in New York, was on vacation with her family and having a bit of trouble. Her daughter, “who was maybe 7 at the time,” Ms. Szuchman explains, “was just scared of everything. The lake, the docks, everything that’s supposed to be fun.”

Her husband suggested the kids make a little podcast; “and she was like, O.K., let’s make a list [of everything that scared them].”

“It was so cute, so funny,” Ms. Szuchman recalls, that she shared it with one of her producers, Amy Pearl. Six months later, out of the blue, Ms. Pearl sent her a pitch for a new show called “10 Things That Scare Me.”

“She had listened to the tape so many times,” Ms. Szuchman says. “She thought it had this core elemental part of the human condition.”

That show, now in its second season on WNYC, is unique for many reasons. Unlike the typical podcast, episodes are very short, from two minutes to maybe 10. The show also has no host or even an introduction. After a short audio cue, the unnamed person just begins listing their fears. “Number One.”

The idea, says Ms. Szuchman, is to create an “immediate connection between the listener and the speaker. You are suddenly thrown into the world of a complete stranger, who by the end you have made a connection with.”

Some fears are expanded upon with stories or explanations. A black man from Ferguson tells the story of being stopped by the police; a woman talks about what it’s like when she sees a group of teenagers. Other fears are simply named, and the speaker moves on: “Number Two.”

After completing their list, the

hosts introduce themselves and the episode is over. Sometimes the speaker has been someone famous, sometimes not. “Finding people from every part of the country, from different political and ideological spectrums, different races, ages and ethnicities was part of our core mission,” Ms. Szuchman explains.

St. Ignatius Loyola taught that the evil spirits of our lives, the things that haunt us or we feel bad about, absolutely do not want to be shared with others. Their power over us, in fact, rests in the secrecy they demand, the sense they create that if we speak this truth aloud, we will look horrible or crazy. And at times listening to “10 Things” feels like being witness to little acts of self-liberation. To name a fear, even without further explanation, is to put it outside yourself, where it has less immediate sway over you.



Chris Alamy/Alamy

Listening to other people's fears not only makes me feel less alone but makes me love them more: the kid who lists his fears in a whisper; the guy whose father, for a nightly bedtime story, used to tell him and his siblings about the coming nuclear apocalypse, where they would hide and how they would survive. Even when I can't relate to what they are saying, or maybe especially then, I find myself filled with gratitude and wonder for their honesty.

"So much of what we're going for is creating an empathetic space," says Ms. Szuchman, "creating an infrastructure that encourages empathy." It is for this reason that they don't have

people introduce themselves until the end. "The minute you know who you're listening to, what they do for a living, where they live, your empathy muscle is being challenged."

It turns out the simplicity of these podcasts is deceptive; each speaker is interviewed for over an hour about their fears to get the material from which each episode is woven. Often that's not easy for them. "We definitely had to work to push people to open up, to be honest. Talking about your fears is really talking about yourself. And we knew we would be making people feel very vulnerable."

"It was really kind of nuts that we got people to do it," Ms. Szuchman reflects. "It's a testament to the talent of the people who pitched the show and [now] produce it."

Jim McDermott, contributing writer.
Twitter: @PopCulturPriest.

A moving meditation on grief

"I Lost My Body" might be the freshest film experience of 2019, both in story and style. Tracing the harrowing journey of a severed hand through the streets of Paris, the film is a meditation on how mourning is a complicated expression of both loss and hope.

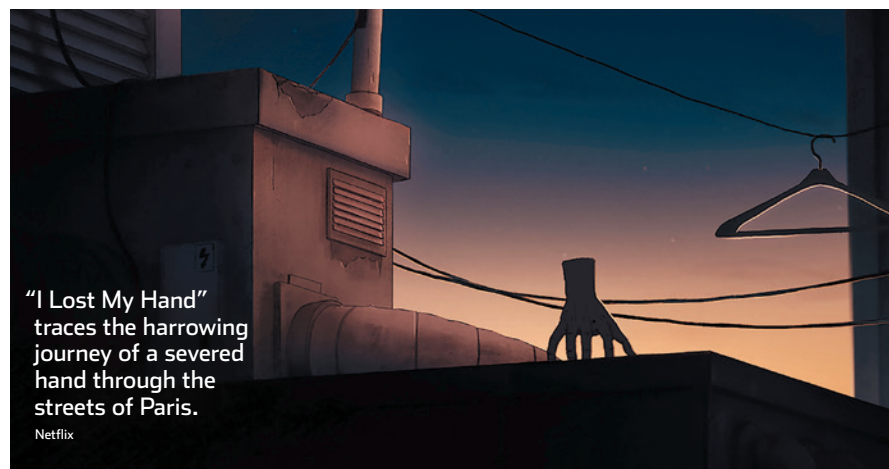
The French film follows Naoufel, a young French misfit who dreams of becoming an astronaut and a pianist but is struggling to make ends meet as a pizza delivery driver. After landing an apprenticeship with a carpenter to get closer to his love interest, Gabrielle, Naoufel loses his hand in an accident. His severed hand comes to life through unexplained supernatural means and goes on a journey through Paris to find its body as the film cuts back through Naoufel's memories of loss and love. Though this sounds like the premise of a horror film or a dark comedy by Tim Burton, the film turns out to be a contemplative, romantic, adventurous fairy tale.

"I Lost My Body" is primarily about loss. Coupled with the death of his parents as a child, the new loss of Naoufel's hand cuts off for certain his dream of becoming a pianist and possibly his dream of becoming an astronaut. This new wound stirs up memories of being severed from his parents at a young age. The combined

grief pushes him to a breaking point. Though the film is not explicitly religious, the protagonist's difficulty reconciling loss with a cosmic plan resonates as an exploration of the problem of evil. Why would a loving God allow suffering to happen?

The film uses color to express hope through suffering. Against the muted tones of the streets of Paris, a few vibrant symbols of hope stand out: a red crane on the skyline; a young woman's fluorescent pink and green headphones in the crowd; a red "record" button against the tan play buttons on a tape recorder. The film masterfully weaves together a sense of both brokenness and wholeness, distance and togetherness. This is especially true in the final scene. After taking a leap of faith, Naoufel looks out on the horizon. A far-off building with the words "JE SUIS LA" (I am here) in graffiti is placed where Naoufel's missing hand would be in the frame. It is a satisfying conclusion to the isolation Naoufel experiences throughout the film. The hope of reunification with loved ones after death sits on the horizon, out of reach only for the moment.

Mike Seay was an editorial intern at **America** in summer 2019.



"I Lost My Hand" traces the harrowing journey of a severed hand through the streets of Paris.

Netflix

Spiritual Blindness

Readings: 1 Sm 16:1, 6-13; Ps 23; Eph 5:8-14; Jn 9:1-41

Last week, we read in the Gospel of John about the woman at the well, who believes in Jesus and inspires others to believe by her preaching. This Sunday, John gives us another unnamed person who becomes a model of faith and discipleship.

The narrative begins with an important note about physical ailments. When Jesus and his disciples encounter a man who has been blind since birth, the disciples ask whether he or his parents sinned (Jn 9:3). Their question reflects a view of disabilities as divine punishments. This is an old way of thinking that still persists with some people today. Jesus rejects this attitude: “Neither he nor his parents sinned.” Jesus’ correction of such close-minded thinking should inspire us to value and respect all people.

Then Jesus heals the man with his own saliva. He spits on the ground, makes clay, spreads it on the man’s eyes and instructs the man to wash his face in the pool of Siloam. Using the earth’s resources of dirt and water, Jesus gives this man physical sight.

The story that unfolds has several parallels to the story of the woman at the well. The woman and man both come to believe in Jesus because of his personal encounter with them. For the woman, Jesus tells her about her life (Jn 4:17-18). For the man, Jesus defends and heals him (9:3-7). Both of these people share their experience with the community and affirm Jesus as a prophet (4:19, 9:17). Similarly, Jesus reveals his identity as the Messiah (4:26) and the Son of Man (9:37) directly to the woman and man.

But there are also significant differences between these stories in the reactions of the community. When the woman preaches, the Samaritans come to believe in Jesus; yet when the man repeatedly shares his healing story with the Jewish Pharisees, they condemn Jesus as a sinner who violates the Sabbath. The Pharisees interview the man multiple times, inquire with his parents and press the man to deny Jesus’ healing abilities. Ironically, the Samaritans, who were enemies of the Jews, believe in Jesus and invite him to stay with them while Jesus’ own community rejects him.

*‘As long as I am in the world,
I am the light of the world.’
(Jn 9:5)*



PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

How can recognizing your spiritual blindness increase your relationship with God?

How do you proclaim Jesus’ significance to the world?

Do you recognize the value of all people in your community?

At the end of the narrative, Jesus criticizes the Pharisees. When he reveals his identity to the man, Jesus says that he came into the world “so that those who do not see might see, and those who do see might become blind” (Jn 9:39). The Pharisees ask him if he thinks they are blind, and Jesus says, “If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you are saying, ‘We see,’ so your sin remains.” In this statement, Jesus suggests that the Pharisees are sinful because their self-assurance prevents them from recognizing Jesus’ significance.

Spiritual blindness is often assumed to be a negative attribute, but here John’s Gospel suggests that we must fully appreciate our own spiritual blindness in order to see the light of Christ. As we journey through Lent, we should acknowledge our limitations and seek healing from Christ. Today’s Gospel begins with a physical healing and ends by asserting the importance of spiritual healing.

Another Biblical Model for Women Preachers

Readings: Ez 37:12-14; Ps 130; Rom 8:8-11; Jn 11:1-45

For the past two weeks, we have heard readings, unique to John's Gospel, that focus on unnamed people whose initial encounters with Jesus lead them to believe in him. This Sunday, however, John records the faithfulness of Jesus' friends, Martha and Mary, whose brother Lazarus has recently died. Interpreters often focus on the raising of Lazarus and its obvious parallels to Jesus' resurrection. But Martha and Mary are at the center of this story. They provide us with another biblical example of women as preachers and steadfast believers in Christ.

The sisters Martha and Mary are friends of Jesus who believe that he is the Messiah. In the next chapter, it is Mary who anoints Jesus with fragrant, expensive oil in preparation for his burial (Jn 12:1-8). When their brother becomes ill, Martha and Mary appeal to Jesus, trusting that he has the power to heal. Jesus is unresponsive because he knows that Lazarus's death will be "for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it" (Jn 11:4). Raising Lazarus from the dead is the culmination of the powerful signs Jesus performs in the Gospel of John.

'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.' (Jn 11:21, 32)

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

What actions can you take to promote women as church leaders?

Where are you within your Lenten journey?

Do you remain faithful to God even during difficult moments?

After Lazarus had been in the tomb for four days, Jesus approaches Bethany, and Martha goes out to meet him. Her first statement is a declaration of Jesus' power: "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever you ask of God, God will give you" (Jn 11:21-22). When Jesus assures her that Lazarus will rise, Martha provides an astute theological response that acknowledges the resurrection of the dead on the last day. Inspired by Martha's proclamation, Jesus reveals powerful details about his identity: "I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die." Jesus asks Martha if she believes, and she responds with a confession of faith: "Yes, Lord. I have come to believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, the one who is coming into the world."

After her encounter with Jesus, Martha returns to Mary, who then runs to meet him. Like Martha, Mary proclaims that Jesus' presence would have kept Lazarus alive. Then Mary speaks volumes with her emotions. Mary's weeping and wailing are powerful acts of mourning that affect those around her, including Jesus, who is upset and deeply moved by her pain (Jn 11:33). Though he demonstrates his power and divinity by raising Lazarus, Jesus poignantly expresses his humanity in his reaction to Mary's grief and in his own weeping for Lazarus.

Martha and Mary epitomize faith in Christ. Even when faced with an unbearable loss, they are steadfast in their trust, and their faith is enhanced by their interactions with Christ. Martha articulates her faith in Jesus as the anticipated Messiah and Son of God. Mary's wailing is evocative to her community and to Jesus, who is moved by her lamentation. Martha and Mary preach through their words and actions. We can learn much from these women who inspire us to maintain an unshakable faith, even during the darkest of hours.

Jaime L. Waters teaches Scripture at DePaul University in Chicago. She is an associate professor of Catholic studies.

Determined to Learn

Girls and their right to education

By Jenny Cafiso



A few years ago, I visited a family in Colombia who had been forcibly displaced by the decades-old conflict ravaging the country. While we talked in their one-room, thatched-roof shack, a girl, 8 to 10 years old, came home from school, greeted us and then without saying a word disappeared behind a curtain. We soon heard the clanging of pots and plates. The smell of frying garlic filled the entire house, followed by more aromas. I then saw her go outside to fetch water, which she carried back inside. After more than an hour, the girl came to say she had finished cooking and asked permission to go out and play with her friends.

At that time, I thought how hard the life of this girl must be. Fetching water and preparing a meal for the family were obviously part of her daily chores. Displaced from their home and living in poverty, her parents would often be out finding a way to earn some income, leaving her alone after school.

And yet, when I met other girls living in poverty, I found myself thinking she was one of the lucky ones. At least she was going to school. For many other children all over the world, particularly girls, this is not the case.

Despite significant improvements in girls' education in the last decade, especially at the primary level, 130 million girls worldwide still do not

have the chance to get an education. Among the poor, the gap between boys and girls is particularly high at the secondary level; girls either do not go to school at all or are more likely to drop out than boys. The proportion of girls at the university level is even smaller.

Poverty and gender bias are the greatest barriers to education for girls. If a family has limited resources, they prefer to send the boys to school. Girls are needed for household chores. A Jesuit in South Sudan recently told me that some girls in the boarding school he helps to run do not want to go back to their villages during holidays because they might be forced into early marriage and not be able to return. In some schools, girls who become pregnant are expelled, condemning them to a life of poverty.

Lack of education affects more than just the individual girls. It is linked to decreased family income, lower nutrition levels and rates of child vaccination, leading to poorer health for communities. It affects society as a whole. It leads to greater poverty and limits the economic growth of entire countries.

Beyond its socioeconomic impact, the denial of education to girls is a violation of a basic human right and of their dignity as human beings made in the image of God.

The Jesuits have identified four apostolic preferences to serve as a

guide for their work over the next 10 years. One of the preferences speaks of "walking with the excluded: the poor, the outcasts of the world, those whose dignity has been violated, in a mission of reconciliation and justice." Among those who are excluded are girls denied access to quality education.

Walking with them requires a gender- and age-sensitive approach: from needs assessment to the implementation and the evaluation of any initiative we take. Jesuit organizations like the Jesuit Refugee Service and Fe y Alegría have made girls' education a priority. Organizations like Lok Manch in India have developed policies that allow them to promote access to education and other human rights from a perspective of gender.

Girls are determined to learn. I have met girls who walk up to five hours a day to get to school, who will gather around one lightbulb to do their homework and who will take exams on the ground under a tree. They do it for themselves, for their future and for the good of the community. All they need is an opportunity.

Jenny Cafiso is the executive director of Canadian Jesuits International and previously worked with the international office of the Jesuit Refugee Service in Rome.

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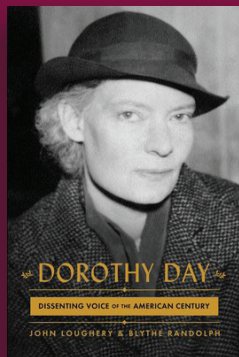
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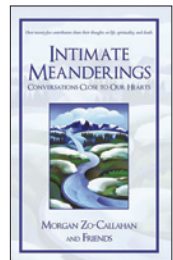
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