

America

THE JESUIT REVIEW OF FAITH AND CULTURE

The Case for Saint Black Elk

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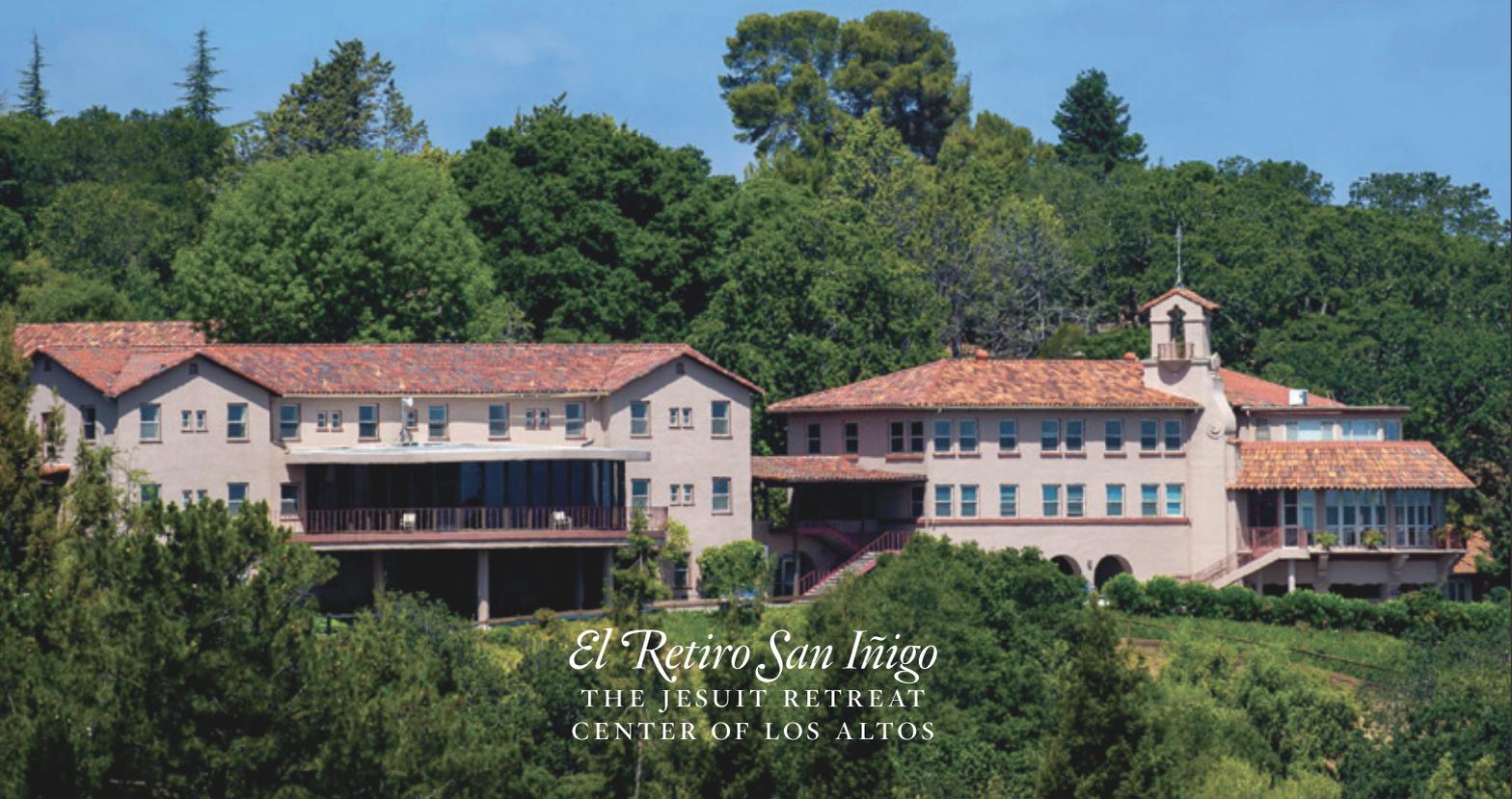
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1,825 Days...and Counting

I am writing this column on the fifth anniversary of my first day as the 14th editor in chief of this magazine. In truth, I can hardly believe that it's been only five years. During these 1,825 days, the pace and breadth of change in the worldwide church and in our tiny corner of it here in New York has been simply astounding.

Consider the following: On Oct. 1, 2012, Benedict XVI was still pope, showing no signs of slowing down. If you had suggested then that he would resign within six months (the first pope to do so in centuries), very serious people would have laughed at you. If you had suggested that he would be succeeded by a Jesuit, those same people would have never taken you seriously again—until, of course, all that happened, which it did, as well as a dizzying cavalcade of other firsts: the first pope from the New World; the first pope to pick Francis as his papal name; the first to sit for an uncensored interview, published in these pages; the first pope to address a joint session of the U.S. Congress.

The year 2012 was before “Who am I to judge?” before “Laudato Si” and “Amoris Laetitia”; before the controversial *dubia*; before Indianapolis (against every expectation) received a cardinal's red hat, while Milan did not.

It's been quite a journey. Thank you for walking with us every step of the way. These five years have also been transformative for us. In 2012, **America** had 16 full-time employees. Today, we employ 43. Our online readership is four times what it was in 2012, and we currently have the largest number of print subscribers in 15 years. We've redesigned and relaunched our print edition and website, launched a film division, started a media fellow-

ship for young professionals, debuted a weekly radio show, rebooted the Catholic Book Club and recruited a worldwide network of correspondents and contributing writers. All of that was possible because of you, the most loyal and generous readers in publishing. On behalf of our directors and staff: Thank you.

At the end of this month, **America Media** will move to our new headquarters at 1212 Avenue of the Americas, a state of the art facility designed specifically for this new **America**. The move will mark the end of the beginning of our transformation into a 21st-century multiplatform media ministry. You are welcome to drop by and visit if you're ever in New York. It'll be easy to find us. Our new headquarters will be right across the street from the Fox News broadcasting center (insert witticism here). Also nearby are NBC Studios and Rockefeller Center, as well as The Wall Street Journal and the studios of Sirius Radio. St. Patrick's Cathedral is a block away. St. Ignatius always said that Jesuits should be at the center of things, right at the intersection of the church and the world, interpreting one for the other.

“And so **America** set up shop overlooking the public square,” I wrote in my first column as editor in chief, “right at the corner of the church and the world. The object was threefold: to assist with the faith formation of American Catholics, the evangelization of American culture and the progress of America's civil society. Thus, our name. In 1909—when the nation's Catholic citizens were viewed with disdain—this kind of intellectual apostolate was especially needed. For different but no less daunting reasons, this apostolate is still needed today. The

U.S. body politic, sickened by the toxin of partisanship, needs the elixir of charity and clarity. The body of Christ also needs healing, torn asunder as it is by scandal and ideological divisions that thoughtlessly mimic their secular counterparts.

“**America** neither pretends nor aspires to be the solution to these problems. We simply hope, as our forebears did, that our review—in print and online—will serve as one model of a truly Catholic as well as a truly American public discourse, one marked by faith, hope and charity.”

•••

With this issue, **America** launches a new occasional section called Faith & Reason, which will feature articles about contemporary theological or ecclesial questions, usually by prominent theologians. The Rev. Robert Imbelli kicks off the new section in this issue. **America** has always published such articles, but in the new magazine design we launched last January, it wasn't obvious where they should be housed. These more scholarly and explicitly theological essays had a home neither in the features section, which houses mostly reported articles by professional journalists, nor in the Faith in Focus section, which features mainly first-person essays about spirituality. At our last editorial staff retreat, we decided to create an entirely new section with its own heading, look and style—proof, if needed, that after five years in this job, I'm still learning. Thanks be to God.

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



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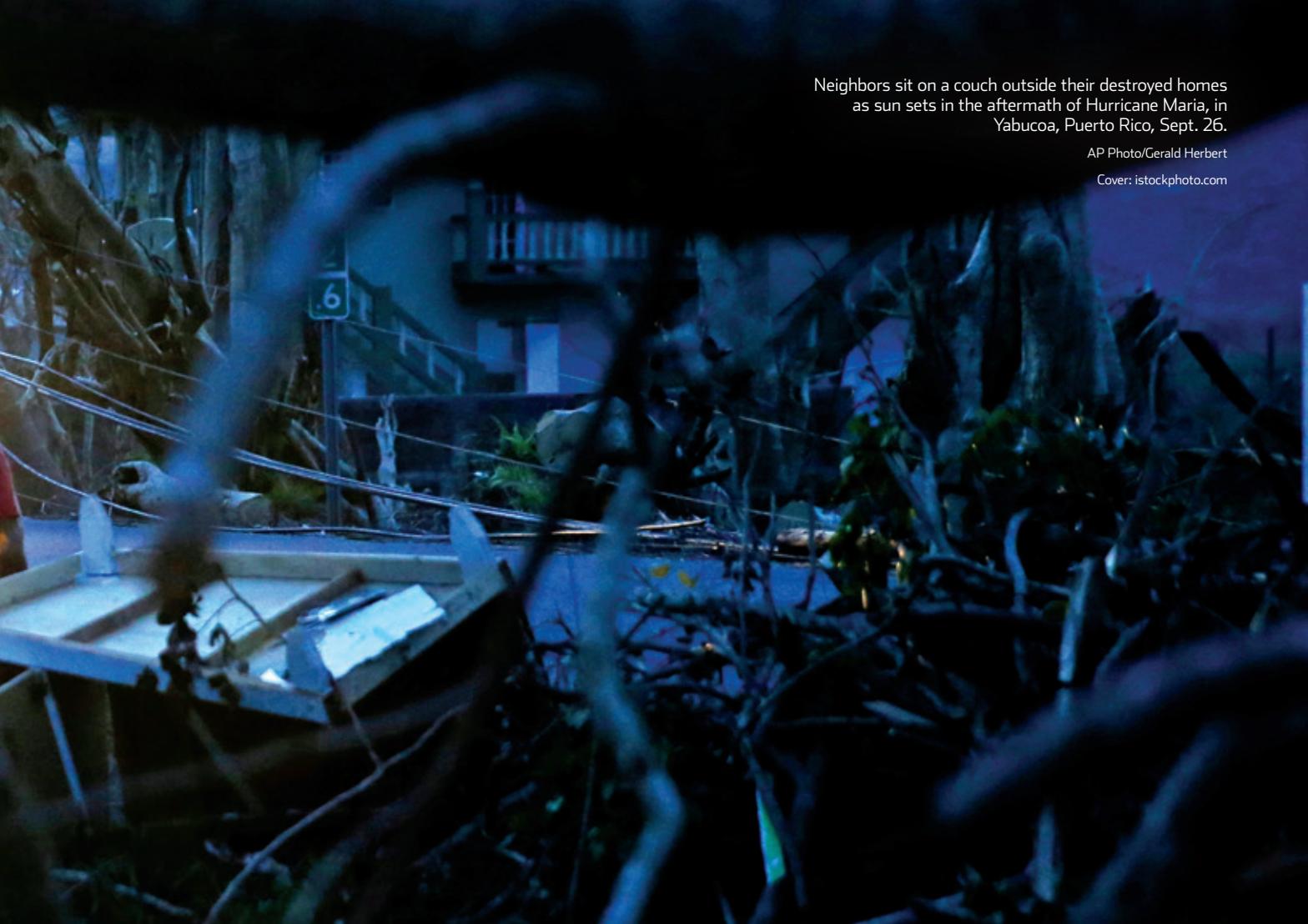
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Neighbors sit on a couch outside their destroyed homes as sun sets in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria, in Yabucoa, Puerto Rico, Sept. 26.

AP Photo/Gerald Herbert

Cover: istockphoto.com

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What role does social media play in your faith life?

In response to a survey distributed on Facebook and Twitter and in our email newsletter, a small group of people told **America** that social media had played a negative (6 percent) or very negative (1 percent) role in their faith lives. Younger readers were more likely than others to choose this answer. “There doesn’t seem to be any room for dialogue. It’s either one extreme or the other,” said one reader from North Carolina.

A high percentage of **America** readers characterized social media’s role in their faith lives as either positive (32 percent) or very positive (21 percent). Julie King of Smithfield, R.I., told **America**: “Since using Facebook to follow

numerous theologians and our parish priest and director of religious education, I have been exposed to so many wonderful, insightful articles and lectures and homilies. I have learned so very much about my Catholic Church.”

Forty percent of respondents to our poll had mixed experiences of social media in the context of their faith. These readers described having both negative and positive interactions. Kim Murphy of Philadelphia wrote: “While social media is a good way to stay informed about church news and papal events, it is often slanted in perspective (e.g., conservative or liberal) and often has a comments section that overflows with hateful, disrespectful discourse.”

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN YOUR FAITH LIFE?

VERY POSITIVE

“I like how Pope Francis has embraced social media and used it to educate and inspire Catholics (and people of many other faiths).”

Colette Tarallo
Flanders, N.J.

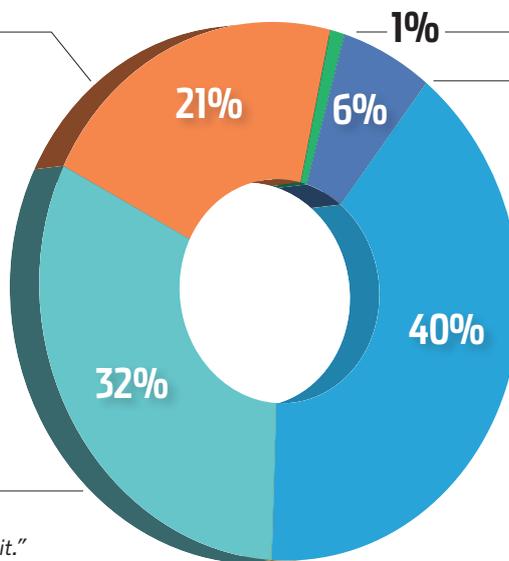
“Social media is an informative platform.... It’s important that we remain informed to join together in prayer and in community efforts to squelch rumors, attacks and possible separations before their occurrence.”

Tamra Gallant
Sanford, N.C.

POSITIVE

“Social media brings the message to those who might not have the opportunity to see and hear it.”

Francis Leasiolagi
Honolulu, Hawaii



VERY NEGATIVE

NEGATIVE

“Facebook is the worst. Too many people posting hateful things about people.”

Larry Osweiler
Sault Sainte Marie, Mich.

MIXED

“The manner in which people speak to or more accurately at each other greatly saddens me.... I also think social media contributes to the elevation of opinion over actual learned thought.”

Kim Murphy
Philadelphia, Pa.

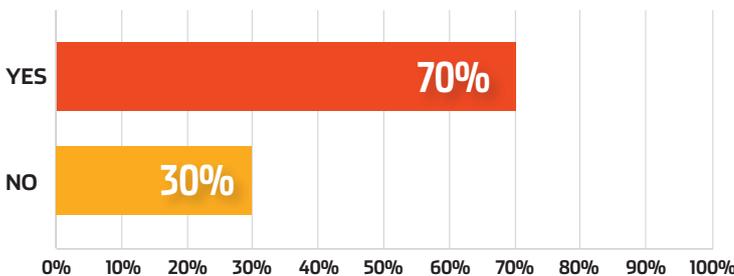
“Social media is a great way of getting information out there.... Unfortunately, at times we forget our call to love one another when it comes to responding to the information we are presented with.”

Anonymous
Huntsville, Ala.

“Social media, reflecting our society, has become extremely polarized. Extremism on the right has been legitimized by our political process. Thus social media reflects these divisions.”

Mike Griffin
East Marion, N.Y.

HAS SOCIAL MEDIA HELPED YOU GROW CLOSER TO GOD?



These results are based on reader responses to a poll promoted on Facebook, Twitter and in our email newsletter. Because of rounding, percentages may not add up to 100.

No Surprise

Re “Civil Society and a Public Argument,” by Matt Malone, S.J. (Of Many Things, 10/2): I have no problem with this column’s deploring the loss of linguistic civility and polite forbearance, but I have a great deal of trouble handling your “surprise” that things have devolved to the current distasteful state.

Stuart Meisenzahl

Online Comment

Cognitive Dissonance

Re “Government Discrimination,” by Nicholas P. Cafardi (10/2): I noticed when I moved to a suburb of Detroit from Ontario, Canada, that the neighborhoods were divided by income. It was amazing to me to see schools where kids from one socioeconomic group, despite attending public schools, had to engage only with other kids from the same narrow income strata.

I hope that this book starts the conversation by shining a light on a system that seems to be stuck in the past. Real change cannot happen until everyone takes responsibility for it. When you are taught that everyone is equal and then you live in a place where equality is not a reality, what do you think you learn?

Catherine Shortt

Online Comment

Religious Antiwar Mentors

Re “Ken Burns’s ‘Vietnam’ Revisits Division and Bloodshed Wrought By a ‘Barbaric War,’” by Raymond A. Schroth, S.J. (10/2): My involvement with the Vietnam antiwar movement was the direct result of Catholic religious activists at the time, particularly Fathers Daniel and Philip Berrigan and their friends, so I appreciate Father Schroth’s observations. As a high school student in New Jersey, I remember reading essays on war and peace by Father Berrigan and Thomas Merton in Jubilee magazine, a great Catholic publication of happy memory!

Neglecting the religious aspect of the peace movement is a serious oversight, given the spiritual power of the Catholic activists and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s wonderful antiwar address at Riverside Church in 1967. I am forever indebted to the religious mentors of that time, particularly Dorothy Day and Father Dan Berrigan, who took the time to help many of us find the way.

Mary Kambic

Online Comment

Support KNOM

Re “A trip to the country’s oldest Catholic radio station,” by Pauline Hovey (10/2): I am so pleased to see this detailed article. I have been on the mailing list for KNOM (and a very small-time contributor) for many years. They have an excellent newsletter that one can read online at knom.org. They are great witnesses for the faith in a very difficult environment. I hope this article will lead to more contributions!

Ann Johnson

Online Comment

Needless Suffering

Re “Death & Life in the Afternoon: A Meditation on Bullfighting,” by Angela Alaimo O’Donnell (10/2): The St. Francis Alliance writes to share its dismay that a Christian magazine published an article romanticizing bullfighting. S.F.A. is a group of Catholics and other people of good will committed to seeking a just and compassionate world for all creatures.

Multiple popes have condemned the practice. In 1920 Benedict XV wrote that the church continues “loudly to condemn these shameful and bloody spectacles.”

The author acknowledges that bullfighting is cruel yet also portrays it as beautiful and meaningful. We are astonished that a Christian magazine would publish an article with so little nuance and in contravention of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, which says of animals: “Men owe them kindness.... It is contrary to human dignity to cause animals to suffer or die needlessly.” Bullfighting serves no purpose other than the entertainment of a few. It is needless suffering and should be treated accordingly.

Liz Holtz

St. Francis Alliance

Washington, D.C.

Ignoring Reality

Re “The Decline of Unions Is Part of a Bad 50 Years for American Workers,” by Kevin Clarke (9/4): This article is correct in stating the importance of unions. But it ignores the reality that the United States is part of a global economy where limited resources are shared among countries.

LeRoy Schlagen

Richmond, Minn.

Appeal or Accusation? How We Use ‘Pro-Life’ and Why It Matters

A recent study found that the Flint water crisis resulted in a “horrifyingly large” increase in fetal deaths and miscarriages. This tragic news was quickly met with pro-choice commentators like Joan Walsh of *The Nation* asking, “Where are the so-called ‘pro-lifers’ on this tragedy?” A piece published by *Cosmopolitan* was headlined “The Stunning Hypocrisy of the Pro-Life Movement.” It argues (illogically) that since national and local pro-life organizations did not immediately comment on this study, their true reasons for opposition to abortion must not be about the life of the unborn but instead about “women getting to be decision-makers over their own bodies.”

Around the same time, in his in-flight press conference returning from Colombia, Pope Francis was asked about the cancellation of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, which places 800,000 young people without legal immigration status in danger of deportation. In the pope’s reply, he said that since President Trump is pro-life, he should “understand that the family is the cradle of life, and that it must be defended as a unit.” The Rev. Frank Pavone, national director of *Priests for Life*, took to the website *Breitbart* to question the fairness of Pope Francis’ description of immigration as a pro-life issue, claiming (misleadingly) that “since there is no specific immigration policy in the *Catholicism*,” Catholics can disagree about immigration without calling their pro-life commitment into question.

What do these two very different rhetorical invocations of the term “pro-life” have to do with each other?

The first is using “pro-life” as a bludgeon, without attempting to understand pro-lifers’ actual commitments and concerns. This use primarily serves to confirm existing suspicions that pro-lifers are opposed to women’s rights and autonomy rather than concerned for the rights of children before birth. Those who employ this tactic seem to hope that pro-lifers will recognize their own “hypocrisy” and stop opposing abortion, rather than start arguing for aid in the aftermath of the Flint water crisis.

The second use of “pro-life,” by the pope, employs the phrase to make an appeal, hoping to move consciences that recognize the dignity of vulnerable life in the womb to also defend those who are vulnerable as immigrants.

But both uses of the term illuminate the complicated terrain of moral discourse in U.S. public life, always in evidence most strongly with respect to abortion. The line between appeals to conscience and accusations of hypocrisy is distressingly thin. It is all too easy to focus more on catching opponents flat-footed than on finding common ground on an important issue where agreement should be possible.

Perhaps hyperventilating accusations of pro-life hypocrisy reveal an intuition about the attractiveness of the moral coherence of a complete defense of life. We ought to acknowledge more readily that being pro-life should include concern for the vulnerable outside the womb. While doing so may not win over absolutist pro-choice advocates, it might help persuade the majority of Americans who question unlimited access to abortion to listen more carefully.

The Forgotten Americans of Puerto Rico

More than a week after being hit by Hurricane Maria, the island of Puerto Rico, home to 3.4 million citizens of the United States, was still crippled by electricity and telecommunications blackouts and was coping with severe shortages of food, drinkable water, fuel and basic medical supplies. But the communications problems were no excuse for the slow response of the U.S. government to the disaster or for the island receiving less news coverage than Florida and Texas did after they were hit with hurricanes a few weeks ago (especially when so much attention was instead given to the incendiary tweets by President Trump over football players exercising their rights of free expression).

The miseries wrought by Hurricane Maria are not dissipating soon. It is expected to take months to restore power, and *The New York Times* reported that the hurricane has wiped out crops on the island. “There is no more agriculture in Puerto Rico,” said one farmer. “And there won’t be any for a year or longer.”

If this kind of devastation happened on the mainland, the congressional delegation from the affected states would make sure all of us were aware of the needs of their constituents and would press the president and the Senate and House leadership to take immediate action—perhaps by using the leverage of their votes on important pieces of legislation. But Puerto Rico has no voting representation in Congress. Instead it must essentially beg Washington

for the billions of dollars in federal disaster relief that places like Texas would demand as a matter of course.

And if Hurricane Harvey had done as much damage to Houston as Hurricane Maria has done to Puerto Rico, we would have seen round-the-clock news coverage. But few major news organizations maintained a full-time presence on the island before the disaster struck. That may explain why, on the Sunday after the hurricane, Puerto Rico was barely mentioned on the political talk shows that help to set the agenda for the workweek in Washington.

Shortly after the hurricane hit, it became distressingly apparent that many U.S. voters need to be reminded that the residents of Puerto Rico are full American citizens. (One poll found that only 54 percent of U.S. adults were aware of this fact.) That means they are entitled to the same response from the federal government as the citizens of New York or Kansas would be if they were visited by a natural disaster on the scale of Hurricane Maria. It also means that if the situation on the island does not improve, residents of Puerto Rico may exercise their right to move to the mainland—where they would gain the right to elect members of Congress.

Although the United States has long benefited from the geographical reach they provide, its strategic “possessions,” including Puerto Rico, Guam and other territories, have been taken for granted and denied full political representation. Hurricane Maria is a reminder that this two-tiered system of U.S. citizenship is neither democratic nor tenable.

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Between a rock and a hard place: unions and Catholic universities

Many Catholic universities have been caught up in battles over the unionization of graduate students and adjunct faculty, even to the point of hearings before the National Labor Relations Board about whether or not a religious university can be compelled to allow its teaching workforce to organize. Fordham University recently resolved one of these standoffs, reaching an agreement to allow a union election among its adjunct faculty, with the university remaining neutral. Proponents of unionization have claimed, with some justification, that university opposition to unionization, or even reluctance, is inconsistent with Catholic social teaching and downright hypocritical.

For their part, Catholic universities still hope to create a campus culture of inclusion and collective governance. They want wide participation of faculty in the management of academic affairs and see the fostering of a faith community as a perennial goal. University leaders argue that the often adversarial relationship between a union and an employer seems inconsistent with what a community of faith, characterized by care for the whole person, aims to accomplish.

Unfortunately, the present structure of faculty employment, rank and tenure makes it all but impossible for adjunct faculty members to participate fully in the university community. Their second-class status gives them little voice in their departments. Excluded from many benefits that accrue to full-

timers, including health care, they feel taken advantage of and live with the insecurity of unknown teaching schedules that make it even more challenging to arrange work at yet another institution in order to make ends meet. Peace of mind comes only when, after time, a benevolent department chair offers assurances that they will be needed on a regular basis. A union means an opportunity to collectively address disparities in pay and benefits, issues that both full-time faculty and university administrators have too often ignored.

Is this debate ultimately about the church's pro-union teaching versus keeping the N.L.R.B. out of questions concerning religious mission and identity? Or is this a matter of management's insensitivity to the plight of its working poor? As in other industries (retail, for example), does an economic calculus require management to preserve cheap labor and avoid, if at all possible, full-time salaries with their costly benefits? In other words, is this about principle or economics?

From an economic standpoint, it can seem that those adjuncts who run from institution to institution to cobble together enough stipends to make a living are simply the poor cousins of a guild system that restricts special admittance to a lucky few. But this is not due simply to universities' stinginess. The present economic model for tuition-dependent universities forces them to pass on every new cost—every new student service, technology upgrade and government mandate, along with cost-

of-living increases and the spiralling cost of health insurance—to the tuition payer. And the sticker price is already above the middle class's wildest dream of discretionary income.

Most adjuncts have been excluded from cost-of-living raises earned by full-time faculty—in many cases even during the most difficult years of the recent recession—because they are a “forgotten class” when it comes time to press and bargain for raises and benefits. It is not unusual to hear of adjunct salaries, calibrated on a per-course basis, that have stayed the same over the past decade or even longer.

Professor John Pauly, a former department chair at St. Louis University and dean at Marquette, got it right when he told *The National Catholic Reporter* last fall that the real culprit in the battle over unionization is the economic model that has led to universities' dependence on adjuncts and their inability to meet the costs of wages and benefits. Unionization may achieve greater equity within the existing model, but it cannot by itself close the gap between tuition revenue and costs. Until our nation is willing to address that challenge, those squeezed in this economic vise will continue to burn with resentment and justifiable anger. And university presidents will continue to feel the heat.

Michael J. Garanzini, S.J., is a visiting research faculty member at Fordham University and the former president and chancellor of Loyola University Chicago. He also serves as the general secretary for higher education for the Society of Jesus.



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A D.I.Y. recovery?

People in Mexico and Puerto Rico ask where their governments are after disasters strike

The few paved streets in San Antonio Alpanocan, a town of 2,500 in Central Mexico on the slopes of the Popocatepétl volcano, have been abuzz with young men and women carrying pickaxes and shovels and pushing wheelbarrows. They move swiftly among the remains of hundreds of buildings, mostly one-story homes with adobe walls and corrugated sheet roofs, that collapsed during a catastrophic earthquake on Sept. 19. The epicenter of the 7.1-magnitude temblor was only about 30 miles to the south of this poor farming community. More than half of all homes here either collapsed or were so badly damaged as to be uninhabitable.

The quake may not have been as deadly as the one in 1985 that killed thousands of people in Mexico City alone—so far the national toll is 361—but it ravaged many towns in the lush green mountains surrounding the capital.

“It’s all gone; we’ll have to start over,” said Salomón Calderón, a farmer in his 60s who lost his home during the quake. “Most of us don’t have a lot of money,” Mr. Calderón said. “We live off the land, we plant corn, avocado and beans. We won’t be able to get through this without help.”

Fortunately, help has arrived. Volunteers from across the country have poured into the states that surround Mexico City—Morelos, Puebla and Estado de México—with both the tools and the expertise to rebuild the dozens of communities that sustained heavy damage. Students are clearing the rubble and removing cars crushed by fallen walls. Civil engineers are assessing the damage and deciding which buildings need to be demolished. Others have taken to San Antonio Alpanocan’s plaza to hand out water, food, blankets and cooking oil.

Such solidarity in the wake of natural disasters is not a new phenomenon in Mexico. After the 1985 earthquake, the government response was famously slow or sometimes nonexistent, driving average Mexicans to take matters into their own hands.

This time the government was swifter in its response

to the disaster in Mexico City; but away from the capital, in places like San Antonio Alpanocan, the response has been different. A week after the earthquake, not a single soldier or government official could be seen aiding in recovery efforts.

In the nearby town of Tetela del Volcán, dozens of homes had been destroyed. At a makeshift crisis center near a church that looked ready to collapse, some 50 volunteers were directed to inspect buildings, clear rubble and gather emergency aid for homeless citizens. Their work has been hampered by a lack of tools and manpower.

“It’s been very difficult for us. We need to check the damaged homes here as soon as possible because there’s a significant danger of collapse,” said Ana Granados, a civil engineer from Mexico City who is leading the volunteer effort. She and her team had been working around the clock since they arrived shortly after the quake hit, and fatigue was beginning to take its toll.

To make matters worse, Ms. Granados said, regional aid centers refused to supply her team with the tools they need to demolish damaged buildings. Graco Ramírez, the governor of Morelos, has been widely criticized after trucks full of emergency aid gathered by civilians were diverted to crisis centers operated by a state government agency and subsequently labeled as state government aid.

Bishop Ramón Castro of Cuernavaca, the capital of Morelos State, sharply criticized the governor for politicizing relief efforts. The Diocese of Cuernavaca, through Caritas Mexico, has set up three collection centers for emergency aid and devised a system for monitoring the arrival of trucks carrying relief from across the country. It said, however, that several had been denied entrance to the disaster zones.

“The Morelos State government determined that all aid has to go through them,” Bishop Castro said. “They also want to control church aid, labeling it as coming from the state government. But it isn’t aid coming from the gov-





The Jojuha Municipal Palace, in Morelos State, was heavily damaged by the earthquake on Sept. 19.

ernment of Morelos, it's coming from many other people. It's dishonest."

A federal prosecutor's office announced on Sept. 25 that it would investigate the Morelos State government for trying to take political advantage of the aid efforts. Governor Ramírez has denied any wrongdoing. Meanwhile, inhabitants of the disaster zone say they are desperately waiting for government help to rebuild their lives.

"It's heartwarming to see so many volunteers helping us in the days after the earthquake, but what's going to happen in a few weeks?" Mr. Calderón said. "We need the authorities to rebuild our homes, rebuild our lives."

Complaints about the government's lack of urgency outside Mexico City will sound familiar to survivors of Hurricane Maria after its devastating run across Puerto Rico on Sept. 20. Critics charge that the U.S. federal re-

sponse so far to the crisis in Puerto Rico pales in comparison to its efforts after Hurricanes Harvey and Irma struck Texas and Florida.

The island's infrastructure was essentially wiped out by Maria, and its 3.4 million residents expect that it may be months before electricity is restored. Residents in communities outside the capital, San Juan, where relief efforts have focused, reported that they were still waiting for any sign of government relief as a D.I.Y. recovery continued and essentials like water and food grew scarce.

As of Oct. 2, at least 24 deaths were recorded in Puerto Rico, and 30 deaths were recorded on the island nation of Dominica.

Jan-Albert Hootsen, *Mexico City correspondent.*
Twitter: @jahootsen.

A season of disasters

Disaster-relief agencies in the Western Hemisphere have been challenged by an unusual confluence of natural disasters over the past few weeks, including three separate hurricanes that hit major population centers in the Caribbean and in the Southeastern United States and a series of powerful earthquakes in Central and Southern Mexico. The map below shows the preliminary costs and death tolls of these disasters; these figures may go even higher as more damage is discovered. But just because our attention is focused on severe storms and earthquakes in our part of the world, that does not mean all is calm elsewhere. For example, Africa and Asia are now dealing with both flooding and droughts in different areas.

GLOBAL DISASTERS



MONSOONS AND FLOODING IN INDIA, BANGLADESH, AND NEPAL ➤ DEATH TOLL > OVER 1,200
AFFECTED > 40 MILLION

HEAVY RAIN AND MUDSLIDE IN SIERRA LEONE, AUGUST 14 ➤ DEATH TOLL > 1,000
AFFECTED > OVER 3,000

CNN photo/Dinulata Layanwata/Reuters



Sources: hurricane data from news reports at CNN, Vox, The Wall Street Journal and AccuWeather; earthquake data from National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce; other data from The New York Times and the Associated Press. Data compiled by Antonio De Loera-Brust.

Source: "America's Changing Religious Identity," Daniel Cox and Robert P. Jones, PRRI (prri.org). The PRRI report defines "white Catholic" as being exclusive of "Hispanic Catholic"; neither category includes "other nonwhite Catholics." In the political affiliation chart, numbers may not add up to 100 because of rounding.



While U.S and North Korea spar, Pope Francis signals support for global ban on nuclear weapons

A U.S. Air Force B-1B Lancer at Andersen Air Force Base in Guam.

As the leaders of the United States and North Korea continued to ratchet up tensions, Pope Francis threw his weight behind a global effort to ban nuclear weapons.

In a social media message sent on Sept. 26, which the United Nations marks as the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, the pope said, “Let us commit ourselves to a world without nuclear weapons by implementing the Non-Proliferation Treaty to abolish these weapons of death.”

Just the day before, speaking at the United Nations in New York, the Vatican’s secretary for relations with states, Archbishop Paul Gallagher, said the “world is awash” with weapons, including nuclear bombs, and that little is being done to slow their proliferation.

“Without greater international and regional cooperation, especially among weapons-producing states, to control and limit strictly the production and movement of weapons, a world free of wars and violent conflicts will surely remain an illusion,” the archbishop said.

He also addressed rising tensions around the world and specifically called out the war of words between President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un.

“All countries should take a decisive and urgent step back from the present escalation of military preparations,” he said. “The largest countries and those who have a stronger tradition of respecting human rights should be the first to perform generous actions of pacification. All the diplomatic and political means of mediation should be engaged to avoid the unspeakable,” he added.

“Unfortunately, the proliferation of nuclear weapons increases international tensions, as is witnessed in the Korean Peninsula,” the archbishop said.

He added that nonproliferation agreements work, and so “it seems all the more urgent to invest in building those circumstances that would facilitate the creation of new bilateral and regional treaties.” Nine countries, including the

United States, are currently thought to possess the capability to launch nuclear weapons, and North Korea is expected to join that club.

The Holy See is one of 50 nations that have so far signed the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. The treaty bars signatories from developing, producing, acquiring or stockpiling nuclear weapons. It would go into force 90 days after being ratified by at least 50 U.N. member states. So far, just the Vatican, Guyana and Thailand have taken that step.

Under the treaty’s terms, non-nuclear nations agree not to pursue nuclear weapons in exchange for a commitment by the five original nuclear powers—the United States, Russia, Britain, France and China—to move toward nuclear disarmament and to guarantee other states’ access to peaceful nuclear technology for producing energy. More than 120 countries approved the text of the nuclear weapons ban in July over opposition from nuclear-armed countries and their allies, which boycotted U.N. negotiations.

The United States, Britain and France said in a joint statement in July that the prohibition would not work and would end up disarming their nations while emboldening “bad actors.” None of the world’s nuclear powers plan to sign the treaty.

In his U.N. address, Archbishop Gallagher acknowledged that the treaty faced an uphill climb but said the Vatican supports its underlying goals.

“While much remains to be done for the treaty,” he said. “truly to make a difference and achieve its full promise, the Holy See believes that it is one more blow on the anvil toward the fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah: ‘They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; One nation shall not raise the sword against another, nor shall they train for war again.’”

Michael J. O’Loughlin, *national correspondent*.
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As Rohingya crisis worsens, Myanmar's Cardinal Bo calls for healing and justice

Yangon's Cardinal Charles Maung Bo has called for "healing" in his homeland and for "moving forward in peace, justice and reconciliation" in a statement, commenting on the crisis engulfing Rakhine State in Myanmar as thousands of members of the Rohingya Muslim minority community flee into neighboring Bangladesh.

"The trigger to violence and the aggressive response are lamentable," Cardinal Bo said in a carefully worded statement. He expressed "great compassion at the flight of thousands of Muslims, Hindu, Rakhine, Mro and many others that were also scattered, especially children. This is a tragedy that should not have happened."

In the statement, released on Sept. 26, the cardinal expressed support for Aung San Suu Kyi, the de facto leader of the country's democratically elected government.

Aung San Suu Kyi has come under intense criticism for not speaking out forcefully against the military's repression in Rakhine State. About 430,000 Rohingyas, including 230,000 children, have taken refuge in Bangladesh in recent weeks.

The U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees has described the events in Rakhine as a "textbook example of ethnic cleansing." Human rights advocates are urging Aung San Suu Kyi to do more to rein in Myanmar military and Rakhine villagers who are supporting them. But some analysts say she has to move with the utmost political pru-

dence if she is to keep this country on the road to democracy and not give the military a pretext to seize power again.

Cardinal Bo believes she has little leverage. "To lay all blame on her, stigmatizing her response, is a very counterproductive measure," the cardinal said in his statement. He noted that she is trying to govern in a situation where the military holds the balance of power in parliament and controls the ministries of Defense and Home Affairs, as well as the country's borders.

Describing her role as "daunting," Cardinal Bo recalled that in a speech on Sept. 19, Aung San Suu Kyi "expressed her concern over all forms of violence," and he welcomed her assurances to respect "the rights" of people "in Rakhine state"—where 1.2 million Rohingya Muslims lived before the violence—and to make possible "the return of refugees and development of the state."

The cardinal emphasized that "aggressive responses," referring to the military retaliation for August attacks on border guards that propelled the crisis, "without any embedded long term peaceful policies would be counterproductive."

Cardinal Bo, the leader of the 700,000 Catholics in this majority Buddhist country of 53 million people, emphasized that "those who have lived in this country for a long time"—alluding to the Rohingya—"need justice."

The cardinal told **America** that many people in



Rohingya refugees wait to receive aid on Sept. 21 at a camp in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh.

CNS photo/Cathal McNaughton, Reuters

Tent City, USA: Southern California confronts a crisis of homelessness



A cyclist passes the row of tents and tarps along the Santa Ana riverbed near Angel Stadium on Sept. 14.

The city council of Anaheim, Calif., voted unanimously on Sept. 13 to declare a state of emergency because of the homeless people living along its Santa Ana River trail.

The response to this civic crisis follows a familiar “not in my backyard” trajectory experienced in other U.S. communities. More than 13,000 residents had signed a petition calling for the removal of the 400 or so people living along the riverbed.

It is not only Anaheim, but Southern California as a whole that finds itself in the midst of a homelessness emergency. The homeless population in downtown San Diego has nearly doubled in four years, and in Los Angeles County homelessness soared 23 percent over the last year; 58,000 people were without homes. While mental health and addiction continue to drive the problem, basic housing affordability is also a major contributor.

Greg Walgenbach, director of life, peace and justice in the Diocese of Orange County, notes that a growing number of elderly women are among those on the streets. “People who...at one time could scrape by on their Social Security and their pensions are struggling to make it with the exorbitant cost of housing.”

In the city of Anaheim, Mayor Tom Tait, a Republican and a Catholic, has spoken out repeatedly against those who are stoking fear of homeless people and has argued for practical solutions. In February he announced an employment initiative for homeless people, saying, “A good job can transform a life.”

At a city council meeting in September he expressed what many people in Southern California are feeling. “This issue is so big,” he said. “This is something that we as a society need to solve—and we need to solve in a humane, kind way.”

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SAINT BLACK ELK?

An indigenous Catholic holy man could soon be counted with Francis of Assisi and Mother Teresa

By Damian Costello with Jon M. Sweeney

In Our Lady of the Sioux, a small Catholic church in Oglala, S.D., George Looks Twice is waiting. Looks Twice, 83, holds a stick next to a drum that sits beneath his legs as the priest intones the eucharistic prayer. He is waiting for the point of consecration, where the bread becomes the Body of Christ. But instead of ringing bells, Looks Twice will strike the drum three times, the honor beats heard in the Sun Dance and other Lakota traditional songs. The drum will give honor to Jesus, whom the Lakota call Wani-kiya, “He Who Makes Live.”

In one sense, George Looks Twice has been waiting since 2012. In October of that year he was in Rome for the canonization of Kateri Tekakwitha, the 17th-century Mohawk woman who became the first Native American saint from North America. It was during that trip when Looks Twice first thought of how his grandfather Nicholas Black Elk could one day too be declared a saint by the Catholic Church. Before Mass, Looks Twice sat down next to Mark Thiel, an archivist from Marquette University, and they got to talking. Mr. Thiel was familiar with Black Elk but had never met one of his close relatives. Looks Twice mentioned his hope of sainthood for his grandfather. “I felt a tingling, like this was a divine moment,” Mr. Thiel remembers. “Never before had I heard someone speak of Black Elk that way.”

Outside of Pine Ridge Reservation, most people know of Black Elk through *Black Elk Speaks*, the book by John G. Neihardt first published in 1932, based on three weeks of interviews conducted the prior year. Neihardt told only part of Black Elk’s story; still, the Lakota medicine man became iconic for his presence at many of the events that represent the struggle of Native America as a whole. A second cousin to Crazy Horse, Black Elk was 12 years old when he participated in the Battle of the Little Bighorn, in 1876. He became a ghost dancer and fought in the aftermath of the Massacre of Wounded Knee, in 1890. He spent two years touring Europe with Buffalo Bill Cody. Globally, Black Elk is seen as a teacher of what was lost, an alternative and oppositional voice to the forces of industrialization and colonialism. But most seem unaware that he spent half a century as an active Catholic.



Black Elk was known in his time for his ability to memorize Scripture and for his dynamic preaching.



Today on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota, Black Elk's cause for sainthood raises significant cultural questions. Yet in the parish where he did much of his pastoral work, the aura of sainthood is unmistakable.

Back at Pine Ridge, people of Looks Twice's generation know Black Elk primarily from his work as a Catholic lay preacher, or catechist. In 1904, at the age of 40, he became interested in Catholicism after a Jesuit objected to a healing ceremony Black Elk was conducting. He gave up his medicine practice and converted to Catholicism. Black Elk then learned to read and became known for his ability to memorize Scripture and for his dynamic preaching. He spent decades as a catechist, taking numerous missionary trips to other reservations in what he called "spiritual scalping-tours." The Black Elk family stayed so long on the Yankton Reservation that his daughter, Lucy, remembered

being made fun for talking like a Yanktonai when she returned to Pine Ridge.

Today, in the parish where Black Elk did much of his pastoral work, the aura of sainthood is unmistakable. There is an air of reverence when his name is spoken. He is credited with bringing 400 people into the Roman Catholic Church. Black Elk also lived a life of unquestioned holiness and experienced the kind of suffering that is often associated with lives of the saints. His first wife died in 1903, son William in infancy, son John of tuberculosis at 12, an infant son and two stepdaughters of tuberculosis in 1910. He himself lived with tuberculosis from 1912.

But Black Elk never complained about his suffering and he proclaimed his Catholic faith until the end. “Now my heart is getting sad—but my heart will never turn bad,” he wrote in a letter in 1948. “Ever since Wakan Tanka [the Lakota name for God] gave light to my heart, it stands in light without end.”

The priest raises the host and Looks Twice strikes the drum three times. Black Elk taught that the drum is the beating heart at the center of the universe, saying, “the voice of Wakan Tanka [Great Spirit], and this sound stirs us and helps us to understand the mystery and power of all things.” The host stays in the air, the congregation is still, and the drum echoes, filling the small church.

Pine Ridge

Last fall, Black Elk’s grandchildren presented the bishop of Rapid City, also in South Dakota, with a petition of over 1,600 names requesting that the diocese formally nominate their ancestor for canonization.

What would the canonization of Black Elk mean to Lakota Catholics today? Not surprisingly, there are significant cultural issues involved. The conflicts of the Indian Wars and the reservation system, easily filed away as history elsewhere, remains palpable and unresolved here. And unknown to Catholics in other parts of the United States, the church, and particularly the Society of Jesus, is right in the middle of it all. The Jesuit-run Holy Rosary Mission was founded in Pine Ridge in 1890, as its website explains, “with the westward expansion that delivered Christianity to the Lakota.” While many missionaries were well intentioned and well liked, the church was also a willing participant in the federal government’s program of cultural persecution, where “saving the man” meant “killing the Indian,” or erasing the only identity he had known.

Some voice no resentment. “It wasn’t so bad,” one Lakota-speaking elder says in passing about Red Cloud School, where children are enrolled from kindergarten through high school. “I learned religion there.” But history has scarred many, and the desire to escape anything related to the colonial past is strong. For some, there is the feeling that the canonization of Black Elk would be a continuation of the church’s role in colonialism. This makes them wary of the process, as if the church is appropriating something that is not hers to take. Once a participant in the cultural persecution of the Lakota, this thinking goes, the church is now using what is left to cover its sins in Native garb.

I heard these concerns in Pine Ridge recently from a

couple of 30-something Lakota who had recently returned to the church. They saw the practices of Catholicism, along with those of the Lakota way, as part of their path of sobriety. But they were unsure about the motives behind the cause of Black Elk. “Look, the Catholic way, it’s a good way,” one said. “It teaches spirituality and goodness, something we desperately need more of around here. But the church has never owned up to what they did in the past. Until they fully admit that and take steps to make reparations, the wounds won’t heal.”

Uncertainty and pain are real, but this healing is occurring, and Black Elk is a part of the process. Much of the church’s ministry in Pine Ridge is now in the hands of the Lakota, both in the parishes and in the community. The “Lakota Catholic Radio Hour” on KILI, the tribal radio station, is a fine example. The station sits on Porcupine Butte, just north of Wounded Knee, and its broadcast area covers 30,000 square miles. Every Friday at 2 p.m., Patricia Catches, a lay minister at the largest parish on the reservation, discusses the intersection of Lakota tradition and Catholicism with a fellow Lakota Catholic lay minister, Charles McGaa, and one of the Jesuit fathers of Pine Ridge.

Patricia Catches’s own roots run deep in both Lakota tradition (Lakota is her first language) and the Catholic Church. Her grandfather, Paul Catches, was a catechist and filled in for Black Elk when he was away on missionary trips. Pete Catches, her father, started out as a catechist before leaving to become a medicine man. Her mother remained active in the church, working with the nuns at the local Montessori school. Patricia was raised in both traditions.

It has not always been easy for Ms. Catches to be both. She was sent to boarding school back when students were prevented from speaking Lakota. “After that, I had a lot of bitterness and moved away from the church,” she once explained in an interview on the “Lakota Catholic Radio Hour.” “But over the last 20 years, as I practiced my Lakota traditional ceremonies, I realized that they teach us to pray for those who have done us wrong. And I saw how much the church has changed, and how today it includes and honors Lakota traditions as well. So now I’m following in my father’s footsteps as a catechist. I’m in the fourth year of a class to become a Lakota lay minister in the church. I’m letting the Lord lead me in that way.”

Black Elk aided her in her journey. In the 1990s, Ms. Catches read a book by the Jesuit anthropologist Michael Steltenkamp, *Black Elk: Holy Man of the Oglala* (recently issued in a revised edition under the title *Nicholas Black*

Elk), that has, more than any other, explained the Catholicism of Black Elk. “What caught my attention is that he was always with the children, that he taught the two ways. It really affirmed my role as a lay minister,” she told me when we recently sat down to talk. When I asked about the possible canonization, she responded: “I’m very excited. Many Native Americans could be named saints.... We stand on the shoulders of giants, and Nick Black Elk certainly was [one of them].”

Black Elk serves not only as a spiritual mentor but also as a lodestar for sorting out issues of Native identity. “There’s an element of mystery to Black Elk,” Maka Clifford tells me. Mr. Clifford is a graduate of Red Cloud Indian School and works there now as the volunteer coordinator. I was told to be sure to meet him because he is a descendant of Black Elk, but Maka quickly downplays that connection. As a descendant, he explains, it “puts a false authority on me, one I haven’t fought for or earned.”

“His journey was complicated, just like mine,” he adds. Clifford’s mother, Charlotte Black Elk, is a lawyer, prominent activist and, according to Clifford, explicitly “anti-Christian.” His father, Gerald Clifford, spent a number of years as a Camaldolese Benedictine monk. When Gerald married Charlotte, he became a Sun Dance chief while remaining a practicing Catholic. As a result, Maka grew up with all the prominent traditions and perspectives in his family.

The most important issue at the moment for Maka Clifford and his students is to figure out how to be indigenous in modern society: “History has produced a society that feels the need to authenticate itself.” He says that participating in activities deemed nontraditional leaves people open to the criticism that they are “not Indian enough.” The witness of Black Elk, as both indigenous and a potential Catholic saint, is a resource in the process of decolonization and healing, he says. “My hope is that we can learn that we can be indigenous and all these other things: Catholic, worldly, a diplomat, a scientist, etc. My hope is that being indigenous is not limited. And Black Elk is part of that conversation.”

The Church

Bishop Robert D. Gruss of the Diocese of Rapid City is the person tasked with deciding whether or not to formalize Black Elk’s cause. Bishop Gruss was born and raised in Texarkana, Ark., and worked as a pilot for several years in his 20s before deciding to go to a four-year college. In

1990, he earned his B.A. from St. Ambrose University in Davenport, Iowa, with a degree in theology. Now 62, he is a genial man put in a unique situation.

He came to Rapid City with powerful connections in the Vatican. Bishop Gruss is a former vice-rector of the Pontifical North American College, in Rome; he was also chaplain to Pope Benedict XVI and is a close friend of the pope emeritus. Intriguingly, the Diocese of Rapid City has been a training ground for a number of people who now hold much more prominent positions in the church: Bishop Gruss’s two predecessors were Charles J. Chaput, O.F.M.Cap, now the archbishop of Philadelphia, and Blase J. Cupich, now the archbishop of Chicago.

Soon after members of Black Elk’s family brought the petition to Bishop Gruss, he began to deliberate. It was his first time in such a process and, he admits when we talk, it was a lot of work. “In the beginning it was going through a lot of documents,” he says, and he felt the pressure.

Essential to the petition’s future is the appointment of a local postulator for the cause. Bishop Gruss has chosen Bill White, a Lakota candidate for the diaconate and the father-in-law of Jerome Lebeaux, a prominent Sun Dance chief. (It is not common for a postulator to be a layperson, but there is no restriction against it.) If the cause ends up moving forward, a postulator at the Vatican will be found, and White will become vice-postulator.

For Bishop Gruss, there is no debate over the authenticity of Black Elk’s conversion. When I ask if the lack of public awareness of Black Elk’s Catholic life could complicate the cause, he does not respond with theory but with pastoral concern. “There is overwhelming support from Lakota people, from the Natives,” he says. (A diocese that uses smudging, the Native practice of burning sage or cedar for purification, and the Lakota Four Direction Song at the Chrism Mass has presumably worked out many of the uncertainties regarding how Catholicism and Lakota practices can make a spiritual home together.)

Still, the image of Black Elk holding a position of honor in the church equivalent to that held by St. Teresa of Calcutta may be controversial. I ask about the conflict that occurred over the recent name change of Harney Peak, the highest natural point in South Dakota, to Black Elk Peak. “There was a lot of opposition,” the bishop says. “The Lakota felt they had a legitimate reason for the change, as it was a desecration to name something that they feel is theirs after someone who perpetrated massacres. The opposition thought it was just P.C. [political correctness], a



Black Elk is known for his presence at many events that represent Native America as a whole. Most seem unaware that he spent half a century as an active Catholic.

Marquette University Archives, Bureau of Catholic Indian
Mission Records, ID 01287/Ben Hunt

reflection of the dominant P.C. culture that tells you what to believe and what to say.”

Could there be similar resistance to Black Elk’s cause? “There may be, but I’m not concerned about that,” Bishop Gruss says. “This is about lifting up people who lived lives of sanctity. And about those people who lived lives of sanctity lifting up the communities they come from. You can’t worry about what people think.” He recalls that people complained about Kateri Tekakwitha’s canonization: “‘Why her? Why now?’ they asked. I’m sure that will happen here.”

When I ask Bishop Gruss what he hopes to accomplish in his episcopacy, he puts his approach to Black Elk’s cause in proper perspective. “This is a mission diocese,” he says, using a common term for a geographically remote outpost of the church. “I hope that I’m able to say that I moved this diocese from a mission diocese to a diocese with a mission.” He does not say so explicitly, but I suspect that having a homegrown missionary saint would help.

Bishop Gruss has decided to continue the process by formalizing the cause for canonization. “The next step is to get the support of the regional bishops, in this case the entire U.S.,” he explains. He will bring the matter to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and expects that his fellow bishops will affirm his findings, as usually happens. He had hoped that this would occur at their June meeting but was unable to get it on the agenda in time; so it will wait until fall.

The Society of Jesus

In talking to the Jesuits who live at Holy Rosary Mission you get a bigger theological picture. This is only natural. Jesuits have been working alongside the Lakota since Red Cloud, the famous Oglala leader buried in the cemetery overlooking the mission, asked for *sina sapa*, or “black robes” (the Lakota term for a Catholic priest), to set up a school. The government approved and Holy Rosary Mission was established. That was nearly 130 years ago.

At the height of the Jesuits’ influence in southwestern South Dakota, there were 23 Catholic missions. **America** reported just a few months ago that 525 acres of that land were being legally and formally returned to the Rosebud Sioux.

For over a century, the Jesuits and their Lakota congregations, like missionaries and new Christians throughout the history of the church, have been sorting out what of pre-Christian culture should be retained. That is one of

the important functions of Black Elk’s life and legacy, according to Joe Daoust, S.J., head of the Holy Rosary Jesuit community today. “Putting the traditions together is a fulfillment of the Lakota people’s search for God,” he told me. Father Daoust has been in Pine Ridge for only two years, but his Lakota phrases flow effortlessly when celebrating Mass. He became fascinated with the story of Black Elk through contact with Lakota Catholics at Pine Ridge.

For Father Daoust, Black Elk’s work is not just for Lakota Catholics. There is the other, often-neglected side of conversion: what new Christians bring to the church. “When opening a cause for sainthood, it’s not just a question of personal holiness,” he says. “You also ask, why should the church be interested in this potential saint? What is exemplary about their witness? Putting Black Elk forward is an example of Natives not just receiving gifts in their conversion but bringing gifts and in turn enriching the church and how we understand God working in our world.”

The analogy of St. Thomas Aquinas and his use of Aristotle comes to mind. It is easy to forget how innovative it was for the Catholic theologian to draw upon the work of the Greek philosopher, but this method gave the church a new and deeper understanding of God and God’s work in the world. What was once controversial is now seen as one of the most traditional sources of Catholic theology. In a similar way, indigenous thought has the potential to give the church a new method for understanding and interacting with God’s creation, what Father Daoust calls “a gift of Native American spirituality to the church.”

Ultimately, Father Daoust is hopeful about Black Elk’s cause. “Pope Francis has spoken of indigenous spirituality in “*Laudato Si*,” and I think he will be particularly receptive to the cause.”

A Living Presence

The plains of Pine Ridge fall away easily to the horizon. Bleak and windswept in winter and desert-like in the droughts of summer, the grass is now long and green from an unusually wet spring. Small horse herds graze, their tails waving like the prayer flags on Sun Dance trees that remain from last summer. Deer dart away from the road, and a red-tailed hawk circles above. It all feels like the renewed world of Black Elk’s vision, where “the birds and animals and lightening and thunder were like laughter.”

Will Black Elk one day be made a saint? One can never be sure, but the echoes in Pine Ridge from him and his work have a vibrancy that cannot be overlooked. It re-



Photo: Becky Berreth/West River Catholic

George Looks Twice (center), along with the other grandchildren of Black Elk (left), presented a petition to open Black Elk's cause for canonization to Bishop Robert Gruss (right). Bishop Gruss has no doubt about the authenticity of Black Elk's conversion.

mains to be seen if miracles will be brought forward and authenticated, but Black Elk has left more than a legacy. There is the feel of a living presence at Pine Ridge—and perhaps elsewhere in this country. Black Elk always had a way of finding himself in the middle of important events.

Basil Brave Heart is another of the many Lakota on Pine Ridge trying to sort out what it means to be both Lakota and Catholic, and to heal the pain for those who feel a sense of opposition between the two. Brave Heart wears many hats: a graduate of Red Cloud, Korean War veteran, a Sun Dance chief, a recently retired Yuwipi healer and a regular at daily Mass at Holy Rosary Church. He went to school with Black Elk's son, Ben, at Holy Rosary Mission and remembers first seeing Black Elk while picking potatoes with his family in Nebraska. As a writer, Brave Heart mines Lakota tradition, Christian theology and quantum physics in an effort to articulate a unified Lakota Catholic theology. He is also the one who initiated the movement to rename Harney Peak.

It happened unexpectedly. Two years ago Brave Heart got up at 3 a.m. and picked up a book on Lakota history. He read an account of the Blue Water Creek massacre, where U.S. Army General William S. Harney and 600 troops attacked a Lakota village of 250, killing 86 (half of them women and children) and taking 70 prisoners. Brave Heart became overwhelmed by the tragedy. He lit some sage to smudge off and started to cry. This was not merely an expression of sorrow, Brave Heart explained to me, but

“an act of prayer.” The word for “to cry” in Lakota, *ceya*, is also the root of the word for prayer, “when the whole body pushes up sacred water that emerges in your tears.”

In the midst of his lament, Brave Heart says that Black Elk came to him, not in a dream but while he was both conscious and in the realm of the spirits. He was not thinking of Black Elk at the time, he emphasizes. “People always ask me ‘How did you come up with Black Elk?’” Brave Heart says. “I had nothing to do with it. It came from God, Goddess, whatever you call the Creator.”

There was a lot of opposition and anger when this religious experience turned into a national cause for changing the name of a local mountain. But after two years, the peak became Black Elk Peak, a change that Brave Heart calls “the answer to many prayers.” And if we take Brave Heart's word about that process, this was an example of the ongoing work of Nicholas Black Elk, an extraordinary Catholic.

Damian Costello is the author of *Black Elk: Colonialism and Lakota Catholicism*, published by Orbis. Jon M. Sweeney is a frequent contributor to *America* and the editor of *A Course in Christian Mysticism* by Thomas Merton, new from Liturgical Press.



LESSONS FROM A HOPEFUL BYSTANDER

*Thomas Merton wrote in a time of crisis.
What would he make of the crises of our day?*

By Andrew Lenoir



A few days after the U.S. presidential election in November 2016, a record 77 percent of Americans told Gallup they felt the country was divided. Throughout 2016, as hate crimes rose 20 percent across the country, headlines from The Huffington Post, Forbes, Newsweek and The Federalist asked readers if they were reliving the infamous political and social strife of 1968. Comparisons to Nixon and Watergate were made on either side of the aisle, as were more apocalyptic terms like the warning we were facing “the end of the world.” In his inauguration speech in January of this year, President Trump promised to end the “American carnage.” On the same day, ABC commentator Matthew Dowd described a nation more divided than it had been since the start of the Civil War in 1861. Nearly eight months of partisan infighting and insinuations followed, and tensions boiled over into bloodshed in Charlottesville, Va., this summer. A rally to “Unite the Right” turned divisive as the debate around a statue of Robert E. Lee, a Confederate general, turned into chaos on American television screens. Anti-Semites marched with torches and Nazi flags, and open fighting broke out in the streets. It culminated in an act of terrorism as a young man drove his car into a crowd of peaceful protestors.

In an aftermath characterized by increasingly heated press conferences, mixed messaging and anger, people on many sides have been left to openly wonder: “Is this really happening in America?”

As if anticipating this collective dark night of the soul, in his 2015 speech to the U.S. Congress, Pope Francis listed four American exemplars of Christian morality for us to learn from, two of whom died in 1968. The first was the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. The second was the Trappist monk Thomas Merton.

Francis described Merton as “a man of prayer, a thinker who challenged the certitudes of his time and opened new horizons for souls and for the church...a man of dialogue, a promoter of peace between peoples and religions.” While all of these labels are fitting, Merton’s role as a Catholic voice of compassion and peace is even more remarkable considering the ways conflict touched his personal life.

Seeds of Peace and Justice

Born in France in 1915, Merton fled with his family to avoid World War I. By the time he was 16, he had been orphaned, with both parents perishing from cancer. In December 1941, Merton joined the Abbey of Our Lady of Gethsemani (just three days after Pearl Harbor). In April 1942, his younger brother and only living family member, John Paul Merton, was killed in action over the English Channel. Just six months into his novitiate, the 27-year-old was alone and completely severed from secular life.

In his position, others might have begun to hate the world. Instead, Merton found he could not leave it alone. Over the course of 27 years, he produced more than 60 works examining the world through the lens of Christian faith. Throughout his journey, he turned his attention to scripture, prayer, spirituality and, most strikingly in the last years of his life, social justice in books like *The Seeds of Destruction* and *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*.

Heaping praise on the writings of James Baldwin, Merton called for white Christians to try to understand and to ally themselves to the efforts of the civil rights movement. He built on the pacifist work of Pope John XXIII, spoke out against nuclear weapons and called for nonviolence amongst people and nations, publicly questioning the wisdom and morality of U.S. Cold War policy. Believing that the future of religion lay in interfaith dialogue, he participated in a conference that included Catholic, Buddhist and Hindu monks in Bangkok, Thailand, in December 1968. Tragically, it was during this conference that he was accidentally electrocuted, 27 years to the day after he first entered the Abbey. It seems strangely fitting that Merton’s body was flown back to the United States alongside the bodies of soldiers killed in Vietnam.

Merton, who would have been 102 this year, taught us that to be a Christian is to embrace the world without fear and to live in a spirit of selfless love and trust. He worried not about his own or even his order’s survival, but about the loss of that essential truth, which he saw as central to the faith.

Apocalypse Now?

Writing in 1966, Merton expressed his fear that “a loss of respect for being and man” and the essential divinity of both would lead to a cheapening of human life and the destruction of the environment. This “sin of modernity,” according to Merton, confuses mechanical progress for human betterment, pursuing personal comfort and societal approval over living the teachings of Christ. Fifty-one years ago, Merton warned that the failure to enact the Gospel’s social implications would result in an “earthly Hell.” Today, recent studies of rising temperatures, sea levels and the projected effects global climate change will have on populations around the world may prove him right.

This year, the earth’s carbon dioxide levels reached their highest in human history, yet this is not the only terrifying global record being broken. This July, an iceberg the size of Delaware split from the Antarctic ice shelf. In August and early September, Hurricane Harvey devastated Houston, Tex., flooding entire neighborhoods and displacing more than 30,000 people. At the same time, across India, Bangladesh and Nepal, monsoons have also brought the worst flooding in years, killing more than 1,200 people and affecting more than 24 million.

In his 2015 encyclical, “Laudato Si’,” Pope Francis described climate change as “one of the principal challenges facing humanity in our day,” resulting from the imbalance of “our immense technological development” and “development in human responsibility, values, and conscience.”

Even as he acknowledges the terrible threat climate change poses for humanity, Francis remains hopeful; but he cautions that hope alone will not be enough. It is our actions in the face of this challenge that will ultimately decide what happens. “Human beings, while capable of the worst,” he wrote, “are also capable of rising above themselves, choosing again what is good, and making a new start.”

In *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*, Merton makes a similar observation about hope and optimism in the context of the Final Judgment. In some sense, we are always facing the end of the world. And yet, this is exactly the kind of crisis Christianity addresses, to which Christ on the



Thomas Merton made clear through his writing that, even in turbulent times, God is speaking to us. The hard part is to listen.

cross is our comfort and our salvation.

This is the mystery of the crucifixion and the resurrection—the perfect sacrifice for the whole world. By falling, by failing, suffering and dying, Jesus reverses the Fall of Adam, saving humanity from itself. Christ's victory saves not just the world but saves us all. Christian optimism, then, is not just the hope that things will turn out all right—it is the complete trust in the truth of God's plan and the role humans have to play in it.

With this in mind, Merton writes, every moment, especially a crisis, is an opportunity to:

[r]espond now in perfect freedom to the redemptive love of God for man in Christ, that I can now rise above the forces of necessity and evil in order to say “yes” to the mysterious action of Spirit that is transforming the world even in the midst of the violence and confusion and destruction.

In other words, no matter the odds, the conditions or even the apparent logic, there is always an alternative. Just as the Salt Marchers of India in 1930 and American Free-

dom Riders in the 1960s defeated their enemies by taking their blows without resistance, the Gospel and history tell us it is possible to submit without submitting, and thus overcome any obstacle. Because the world is already saved and will be saved, it is always possible to say yes to the invitation to collaborate and participate in the world's salvation and the building of the new Jerusalem.

The trumpet of the Book of Revelation has sounded, but in the original meaning of the word “revelation.” We are being revealed to each other, as we are, in how we choose to respond to the problems and whether we will rise to the challenges of our times. We can choose an “Earthly Hell,” as so many seem to wish, or the alternative, as in Rev 21:4: the wiping away of all tears, the end of pain and death. It is a question, then, whether we can make the change within ourselves and what we choose to value, the shift Dorothy Day called “the Revolution of the Heart,” which must begin within each of us.

Becoming Truly Human

It might seem strange to imagine this in a wider American context, but it has happened before. In 1862, as hundreds

of thousands of young Americans fought and killed one another in the Civil War, many took comfort in the words of the “Battle Hymn of the Republic,” that “our God” and “his truth” are marching on. It is in this same spirit that both Dr. King and President Barack Obama invoked the universe and history’s long arc toward justice. If one really has faith in the ultimate divinity of humanity, in the salvation of the world and the truth of the Gospel, history must have such an arc, because its end has already been written. No matter how dark things may seem, this sort of knowledge radically transfigures how one perceives and engages both with others and with external possibilities.

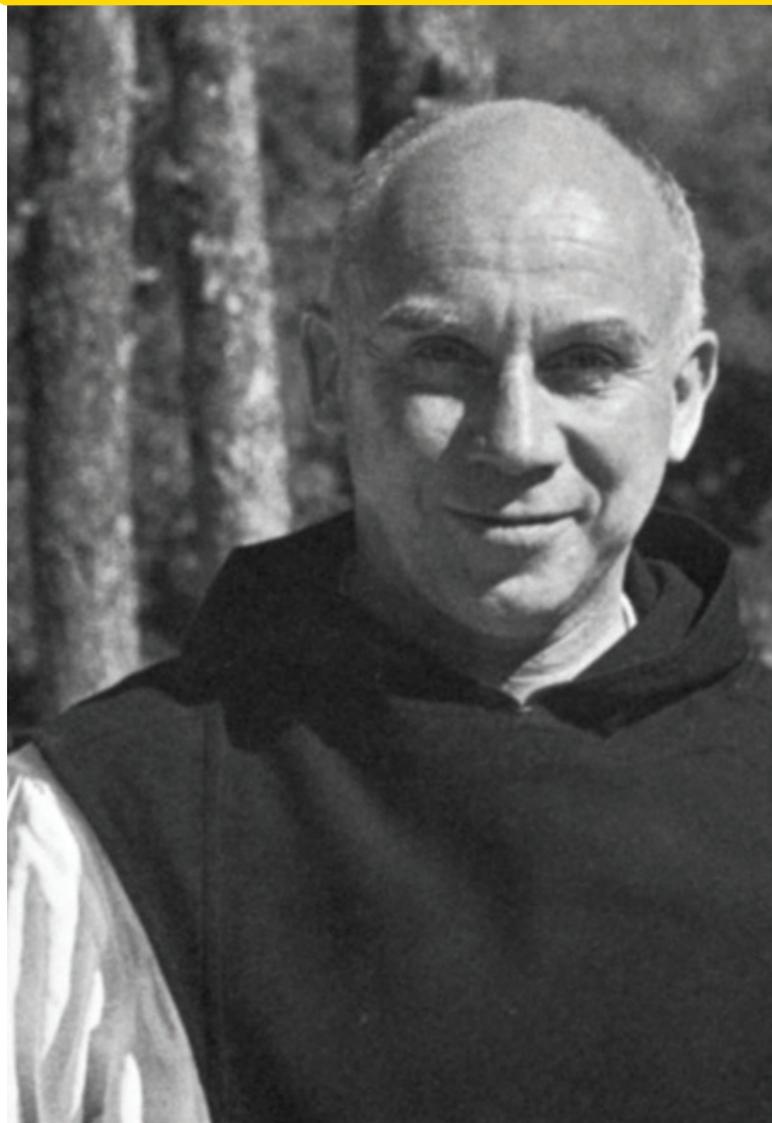
For instance, in 1966, Merton described a mystical experience in a Louisville, Ky., shopping district, famously writing:

I was suddenly overwhelmed with the realization that I loved all those people, that they were mine and I theirs, that we could not be alien to one another even though we were total strangers. It was like waking from a dream of separateness, of spurious self-isolation in a world of renunciation and supposed holiness.

This experience of transcendent love provided Merton with a new understanding of his vocation, his faith and his humanity. To Merton, the monastic imperative toward *contemptus mundi*, literally, “contempt for the world,” was not about abandoning others or the physical realities of life. Instead, it was turning one’s back upon inherited ideas, definitions and preconceptions. Most of all, it made him reassess how we relate to others as members of our faith and our species, and what we owe to one another.

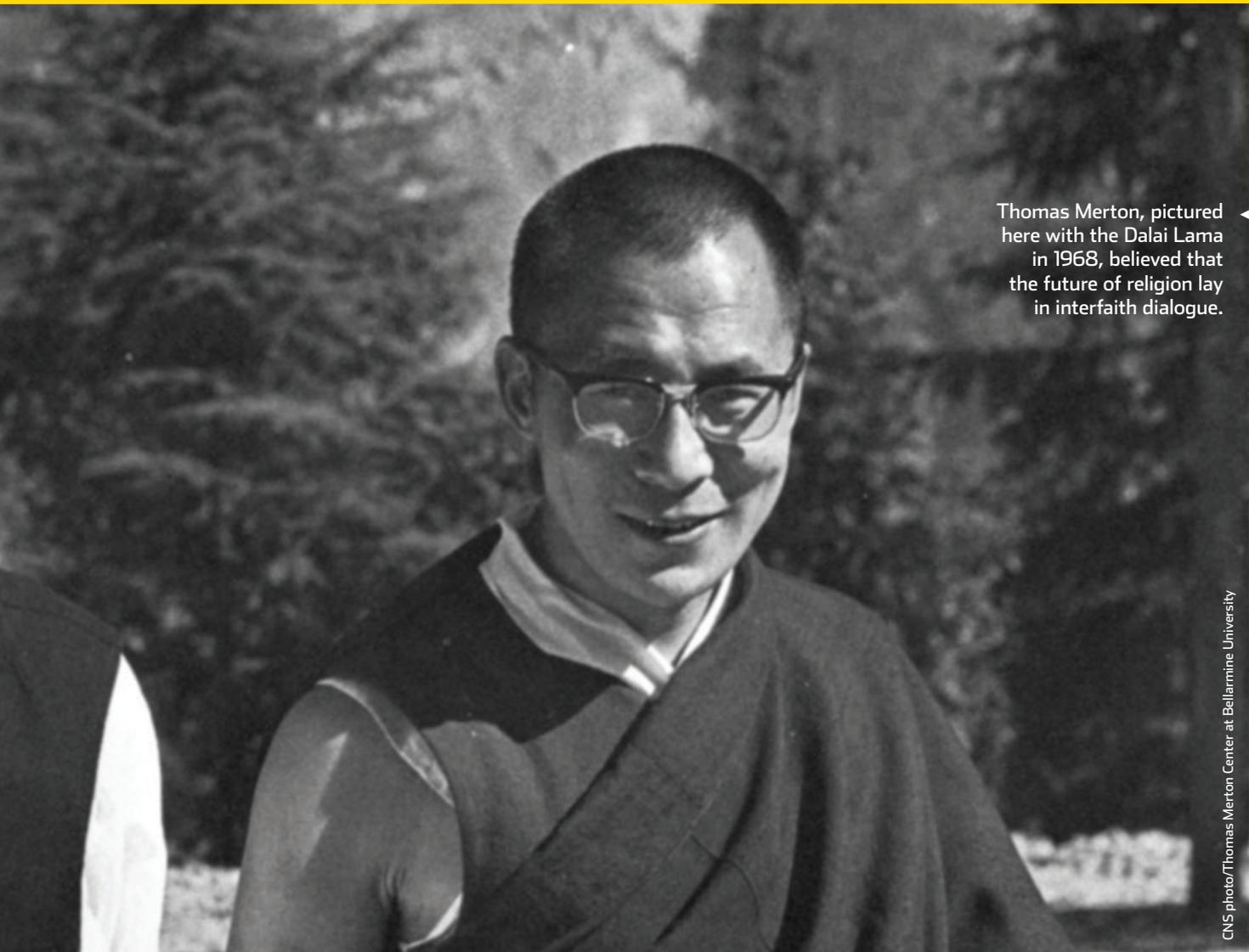
As he wrote in his journal, after hearing other monks praise the destructive capacity of a new American missile, “Have we lost all sense of proportion along with our faith?” To Merton, it was no longer possible to be a true believer and hold up one segment of humanity above another along the lines of race, class, nation or ideology. Instead, in the same spirit of transcendent love, it is necessary to see disagreement and conflict as a chance to learn from each other about ourselves. It is a chance to be better.

In his *Letters to a White Liberal*, Merton describes the then-contemporary civil rights protests as the voice of Black America: “He seriously demands that we learn something from him, because he is convinced that we need this, and need it badly.” Through the eyes of a true believer, necessary criticism and demands for reform ultimately



stem from the same universal source of all good, because God’s love is not a zero-sum game. His love for one group or individual does not diminish or take from his love for others, and in that same spirit, we should take others’ requests for equality and their concerns seriously. Instead, for Merton, God’s love is so totalizing that it wipes away all difference between people. When we give in to and return that embrace, as we give up our preconceptions of our fellow beings, we become truly human. As Merton explained in a letter to the writer James Baldwin, “I am...not completely human until I have found myself in my African and Asian and Indonesian brother because he has the part of humanity which I lack.”

Merton teaches us that in our dealings with our fellow citizens, both of the United States and of the planet Earth, we have the chance to hear the voice of God and collaborate as agents of the Holy Spirit. This means entering an



Thomas Merton, pictured here with the Dalai Lama in 1968, believed that the future of religion lay in interfaith dialogue.

CNS photo/Thomas Merton Center at Bellarmine University

active relationship with God by harnessing and contributing “the creative power that he has placed in us,” or, as St. Paul wrote in his Letter to the Ephesians (2:19-21): “You are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God...the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.”

Of course, as Americans, hearing and respecting our fellow citizens takes on an additional importance—particularly in today’s fractured media and social landscapes. “Democracy cannot exist when men prefer ideas and opinions that are fabricated for them,” Merton wrote, arguing that the country runs on its own kind of faith. Once democracy ceases to exist for a large enough segment of the population, it no longer exists at all. More than 50 years ago, Merton asked himself a lingering question: “What is the situation in the United States today?”

An Ending or a Beginning?

Today, the American situation can seem quite bleak: The struggle of the shrinking working class. The unending bloodshed in Middle Eastern cities as well as ongoing struggle in our Midwestern cities. The crumbling infrastructure across the country and the political stagnation that has turned Washington, D.C., into a “swamp.” While this should perhaps be enough to motivate us to action, in an era of seemingly insurmountable partisanship and endless distraction, it can be easy to give up hope and give in to the comforts and distractions of our technology.

As Merton once remarked, though, in a world before cell phones, emails and social media, “desperation makes the world go round.” The more we have become cocooned within our preferred bubbles of Facebook friends and news outlets, the further we have fallen into the “sin of modernity” Merton warned about—not unlike the Buddhist con-

cept of *samsara*, a life cycle that involves both ignorance and suffering.

Drowning in a stream of reflected data of likes, dislikes, fears and anxieties, it is easy to lose sight of the truth. Still, no matter what the headlines or one's Facebook newsfeed says, the good news of the Gospel should be the driving force in all Catholic and Christian lives. As the church teaches, and as Pope Francis reminds us, there is always time to start again.

In his book *Contemplative Prayer*, Merton makes clear that God is always speaking to us. The hard part is learning how to listen. In the United States today, this means providing others with the chance to speak and to assemble, especially when we do not agree. This means protecting the First Amendment in all its forms, for alt-right ideologues, anti-fascist flag burners, whistleblowers, muckrakers and more. This means learning the difference between an article, "fake news," clickbait and paid advertising, looking at multiple news sources and encouraging others to do the same. This means having hard conversations and not deleting Facebook "friends" because of who they voted for.

Merton's example calls on us to sacrifice the world we have constructed for ourselves: our comfort zone, our complacency, our self-righteousness and our preferred facts. It might not be easy, but it is our small cross to bear if we would ask ourselves new questions and hear the voice of God in others here and now.

How does talking to a protester change your outlook and the questions that you ask? Does watching Fox News or listening to NPR for a few moments affect your perspective of the "other side"? Instead of debating who should and how to pay for health care, should we instead ask whether it is moral, as self-proclaimed Christians, to take health coverage away from 22 million of our fellow Americans. In the face of immigration questions and a refugee crisis, can we forget that Christ himself was an infant refugee in Egypt by the end of the Nativity story?

Are we strong enough to stop bickering about who voted for whom, aggrandizing ourselves as we test others for purity and loyalty? Instead of determining who is the real progressive, the real conservative, the real liberal or the real small-government proponent, is it not time to try a new metric? How do we stack up against the two commandments Christ set out in Matthew: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" and "Love your neighbor as yourself"? Just as Christianity was born into a classical world in crisis, it is in moments of crisis that the Christian message holds

the greatest promise and the greatest strength. When being and man are imbued with their proper respect, each of our lives becomes an opportunity to share and glorify the divinity that dwells within us. As Merton wrote, "To be a saint is to be myself." That is, to be a saint is to be the best version of yourself, to choose to use your God-given talents to do the things that only you can do.

In Houston, as the flood waters rose, an elderly man was trapped inside his truck as the deluge threatened to sweep it away. A group of bystanders saw him, only minutes from drowning, but found they had no rope with which to free him. Instead of despairing, they did what they could with what they had—linking arms to form a human chain, risking their lives and using their collective strength to pull a stranger to safety. Hurricane Harvey was a national tragedy, but in its wake, in these moments of heroism, it offers us modern parables.

Although the actions asked of us will not always be so dramatic, every day presents a chance to open ourselves up, a collective opportunity to bring our unique abilities into the world. They are our gifts, but they do not belong to us. We carry them with us and present them to each other, and in the process, we build the kingdom we have been promised, as we pledged to do, one piece at a time. To be a Christian, then, is to embrace and become the *kairos*—the opening for action guided always by love.

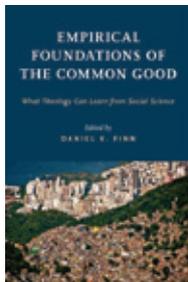
"In times of drastic change," Merton warns, it is easy to lose touch with where one is. We can be thrown off balance and forget whether today is an ending or a beginning, which way things are moving and how it will all end up. In these times, Merton says, "courage is the authentic form taken by love." Courage, however, becomes certainty in the knowledge of Christ's victory. We may not always know God's will. We may stumble and fall along the way, but the path forward is there, and we will find it. We cannot fail to find it if we have faith, in each other, in ourselves and in the truth as Merton saw it. The battle is over. History is already written. It is for us to choose which side we are on, find our role and play it.

Andrew Lenoir, a writer, journalist and historian, lives in Amagansett, NY.



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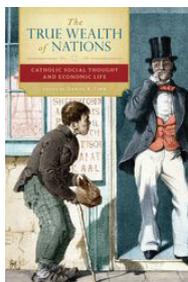
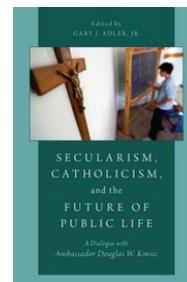
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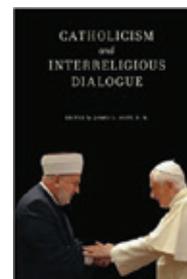
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RETURNING TO THE SOURCE

Vatican II was, at its deepest, a rediscovery of the mystery of Jesus Christ

By Robert P. Imbelli

The *Ottobrate Romane* are those splendid October days in Rome when the daytime sun is warm, the evenings are soft and the light shimmers with singular clarity. I have been blessed to have spent numerous October days in Rome, both during and after my seminary years there. But two October days stand out with special significance and poignancy.

On Oct. 11, 1962, a sparkling sun illuminated the opening procession of the Second Vatican Council as it traversed St. Peter's Square. All present recognized that it was a historic occurrence, but few could have foreseen how revolutionary an event the council would turn out to be. That October day initiated three years of intense labor and high drama, in which even those of us standing on the periphery would participate vicariously.

But it was the evening of that day that particularly enthralled. Thousands of ordinary Romans, as well as students and visitors, converged upon St. Peter's Square carrying lit candles. The air was fragrant and our spirits hope-filled; a full moon shone in the sky. John XXIII, clearly tired after a long and eventful day, appeared suddenly at the window of the papal apartments and delivered a short, animated address that thrilled the crowd and the world.

It became known as the *discorso della luna*—"the moon speech"—because John, pointing to the sky, proclaimed that even the moon had come out to join in joyful celebration. And, in the most memorable sentence of his *ex tempore* talk, he bade the parents present to go home and embrace their children and tell them it was a hug from the pope—*una carezza dal Papa*.

INVITATION TO PROCLAIM THE GOSPEL

Providentially and beyond expectation, I also found myself in that same square 50 years later to celebrate the 50th an-



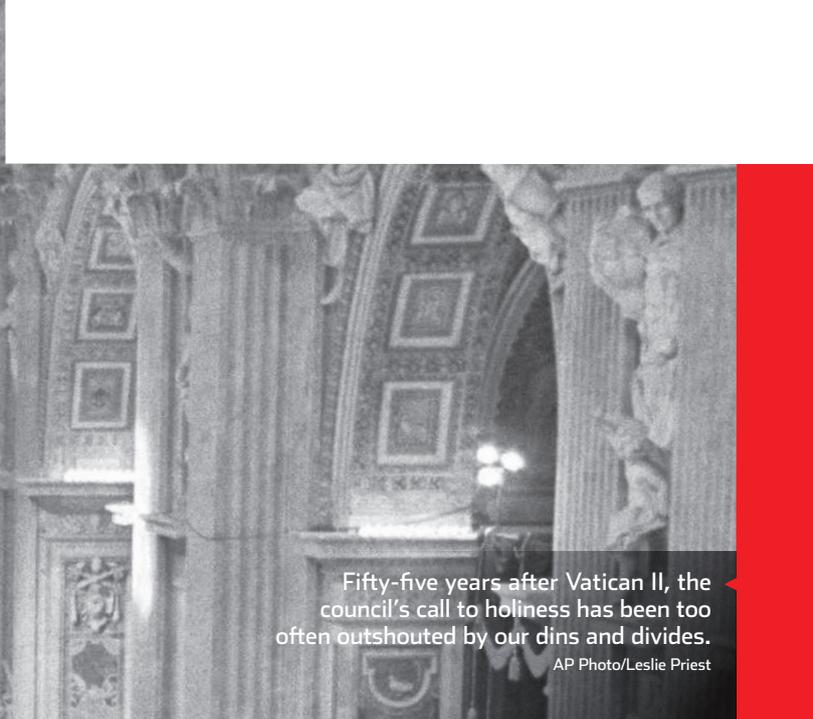
niversary of the council's opening. Oct. 11, 2012, was another sun-bathed day. I was seated with thousands of others, enfolded within Bernini's monumental colonnade, to participate in a Mass celebrated by Pope Benedict XVI to mark both the anniversary of the council and the opening of the Year of Faith that he had convoked.

The Mass and the celebration, Benedict said, were an invitation "to enter more deeply into the spiritual movement which characterized Vatican II, to make it ours and to develop it according to its true meaning. And its true meaning was and remains faith in Christ, the apostolic faith, animated by the inner desire to communicate Christ to individuals and all people, in the Church's pilgrimage along the pathways of history."

Though the council did not devote a particular document to set forth its faith in Jesus Christ, all of its documents are christologically saturated. Indeed, the *ressourcement*—the return for inspiration to the biblical and patristic sources of the faith—was, at its deepest, a re-sourcing; a rediscovery and reappropriation of the mystery of Jesus Christ, the source of the church's life and mission.

In his homily, Benedict underscored the fidelity of Paul VI and of John Paul II to the council's confession of the Christic structure and heart of faith:

Between these two Popes there was a deep and complete convergence, precisely upon Christ as the center of the cosmos and of history, and upon the apostolic eagerness to announce him to the world. Jesus is the center of the Christian faith. The Christian believes in God whose face was re-



Fifty-five years after Vatican II, the council's call to holiness has been too often overshadowed by our sins and divides.

AP Photo/Leslie Priest

vealed by Jesus Christ. He is the fulfillment of the Scriptures and their definitive interpreter. Jesus Christ is not only the object of the faith but, as it says in the *Letter to the Hebrews*, he is “the pioneer and the perfecter of our faith” (12:2).

Now, on the 55th anniversary of the opening of the council, the task remains the same—perennial, yet ever new. It is the challenge to proclaim the Sun of Justice, the crucified and risen Savior, to a world that too often walks “in darkness and in the shadow of death” (Lk 1:79).

FOLLOWING IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF BENEDICT

Pope Francis explicitly unites himself to the words and witness of his predecessor when he writes in “The Joy of the Gospel”: “Christ is the “eternal Gospel” (Rev 14:6); he “is the same yesterday and today and forever” (Heb 13:8), yet his riches and beauty are inexhaustible. He is forever young and a constant source of newness” (No. 11).

Francis has often spoken in homilies and addresses of the need for Christians to find their center not in themselves, but in Christ. This de-centering certainly requires asceticism, but it is evoked, enabled and sustained by the love they have known—the love of him who is Lord, savior and friend. Thus Francis urges:

The primary reason for evangelizing is the love of Jesus which we have received, the experience of salvation which urges us to ever greater love of him. What kind of love would not feel the need to speak of the beloved, to point him out, to make him

Pope Francis has often spoken of the need for Christians to find their center not in themselves, but in Christ.



known? If we do not feel an intense desire to share this love, we need to pray insistently that he will once more touch our hearts (No. 264).

One cannot miss in these words of the successor of St. Peter, an echo of the biblical exchange between Peter and the risen Lord: “Simon, son of John, do you love me?... Feed my lambs!” (Jn 21:15–19). Note how Francis associates salvation with “the love of Jesus which we have received.” And how markedly affective his exhortation is, propelled by phrases like “intense desire” and “touch our hearts.”

One recalls that in the famous first interview with Antonio Spadaro, S.J., published in *America* in September 2013, Francis admitted an affinity with what he called “the mystical movement” in the Society of Jesus, one which he associated with, among others, Blessed (now Saint) Peter Faber. Certainly, by mystical he did not mean extraordinary psychic and physical phenomena. Rather, the mystic is one whose whole life is marked by a deep personal encounter with Jesus Christ. One who has experienced in intimate fashion the love of Jesus, who has become the vivifying center of the Christian’s life, of his or her perception and action. The Christian mystic continually asks, as did Ignatius Loyola: “What have I done for Christ? What am I doing for Christ? What ought I to do for Christ?”

Thus Francis, a son of Ignatius, offers a spiritual counsel. He writes:

The best incentive for sharing the Gospel comes from contemplating it with love, lingering over its pages and reading it with the heart. If we approach it in this way, its beauty will amaze and constantly excite us. But if this is to come about, we need to recover a contemplative spirit which can help us to realize ever anew that we have been entrusted with a treasure which makes us more human and helps us to lead a new life (No. 264).

“Reading with the heart,” “recovering a contemplative spirit,” “contemplating with love.” It almost seems a synopsis of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius or a strategy for receiving the council faithfully and fruitfully—even after 55 years! How else can we truly realize the council’s “universal call to holiness,” which John O’Malley, S.J., has identified as one of the distinctive characteristics of this “pastoral” council?

Francis has made clear in his writings and homilies that he is under no illusion concerning the challenge of recovering and cultivating “a contemplative spirit.” In “The Joy of the Gospel,” he laments that “in the prevailing culture, priority is given to the outward, the immediate, the visible, the quick, the superficial and the provisional” (No. 62). Similarly, in his “environmental” encyclical, “Laudato Si’,” Francis discerns as a primary cause of the crisis that threatens our common home “a misguided anthropocentrism” whereby “humans place themselves at the center. They give absolute priority to immediate convenience and all else becomes relative” (No. 122).

In contrast, “contemplating with love” is, of its essence, ex-centric. It is to be drawn out of one’s self into the reality of the other. It is to discover and abide in a new center, and hence to become a new self. To “recover a contemplative spirit” in a technological and consumerist culture is *ipso facto* to engage in countercultural practices, both ascetical and mystical. It will require concrete renunciations and specific conversions that give flesh to our baptismal commitments (in most cases made on our behalf by others), but now requiring radical adult ratification. Sadly, the council’s insistent exhortation to holiness has been too often shouted by the din of our disputes and divides.

THANKSGIVING OR STRIFE?

The privileged locus for experiencing new life in Christ is through active and knowledgeable participation in the Sunday Eucharist. In the Eucharist, we encounter, in full sacramental density, the living center who is Jesus Christ. As Pope Francis said in a talk to Italian liturgists on Aug. 24:

The liturgy is “living” because of the living presence of him who “dying has destroyed death and rising has restored life to us again” (Easter Preface I). Without the real presence of the mystery of Christ, there is no liturgical vitality. As without a beating heart there is no human life, so without the pulsating heart of Christ there is no liturgical action.

And to foster such active and knowledgeable participation, Francis suggests to the liturgists the need to recover and renew a “mystagogic catechesis” of the sort presented by the fathers of the church. Fifty-five years after the council, are we yet up to the task—prepared to embark upon the liberating journey it unveils?

For far too often the years after the council have been marked less by mystagogy, leading more deeply into the mystery we celebrate, than by logomachy, the strife of words. “Chalice” or “cup;” “consubstantial” or “one in being;” “say” or “acclaim;” Are we in peril of wrangling over crumbs and missing the wonder of the feast?

Now I do not deny that words have their importance. But even the most poetic of renderings cannot replace the experiential appropriation of the Gospel. The power and authenticity of the words we employ in the liturgy stem from the living encounter with the Lord Jesus whose love reorients our lives.

Nor am I an advocate of ill-prepared homilies; and I am as averse to sentimental hymnody, ineptly performed, as the most punctilious liturgical musician. But are we so bereft of contemplative capacity and mystagogical imagination that even in less than inspiring surroundings, we cannot enter into the saving mystery that nourished and sustained Alfred Delp, S.J., in the dankness of a prison cell?

Whether “chalice” or “cup,” it is the blood of the covenant, contained in the vessel, that saves. But do we affirm this merely notionally, not apprehending the consequences and the cost? And whether our lips mutter “consubstantial” or “one in being,” does the awesome claim regarding the ultimate reality in whom we live and move and have our being truly affect and change us? Or whether we simply “say” or, more formally, “acclaim,” does the miracle of the mystery we profess impel us to adoration and praise?

May I suggest that a generous and generative reception of the council, even after 55 years, hinges on the personal response each gives?

The Rev. Robert P. Imbelli, a priest of the Archdiocese of New York, taught theology for many years at Boston College. He is the author of *Rekindling the Christic Imagination: Theological Meditations for the New Evangelization*.

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BLESSED AMONG WOMEN

*A progressive feminist evangelical
considers joining the Catholic Church*

By Jennifer Ochstein



A Protestant friend of mine recently tried to talk me out of becoming Catholic. Maybe that is too strong a statement. Perhaps he was only doing what good friends do: helping me think through decisions that will change my life.

My friend is a philosopher, and he knows how to frame a question to give me pause—so much pause, in fact, that the ardor and excitement with which I was charging forward was sucked back into my heart, a waterfall in reverse. My friend, a feminist and a father of daughters biological and spiritual, said he had witnessed serious psychological and emotional baggage in women and men who grew up steeped in traditional Catholic views of women, men, family and sexuality. Though this sounded harsh at first, he did have a point. People often carry baggage from their religious upbringings. I am certainly no exception.



Why exchange one brand of Christianity for another with similar hang-ups? ●●

I unwittingly landed on conservative evangelicalism when I became a Christian 17 years ago. Unschooled in the many different expressions of Christianity, I had been taught early on to be suspicious of Catholicism, with its papal infallibility, meaningless ritual and perceived Mary-worship. I was indoctrinated with the understanding that, to be truly Christian, it was conservative evangelicalism or bust. To fit in, I adopted the view as my own until I discovered that much of conservative evangelicalism denied me and other women our innate, God-given gifts.

In the denomination to which I belong and in which my husband, an ordained minister, has served 10 years as senior pastor, traditional views regarding gender roles often sequester women in the home to care only for the needs of children and a husband. While some women work outside the home, the role of wife and mother remains a hallmark of female identity. Individual churches have some freedom when it comes to appointing willing women to serve in leadership roles, but women cannot serve as senior pastors the way my husband can. At least in the church where my husband works, women are welcome to serve as deacons and hold positions on the church board and some other leadership roles, which is not true in churches whose senior pastors take a complementarian rather than an egalitarian view of gender. In these churches, the consequences can be stifling. Women are never allowed to take leadership positions in which they oversee men. They are

often relegated to classrooms in the church basement, overseeing the nursery or teaching children. While I know women who feel called to these roles and relish them, I do not.

Now, as a progressive, feminist evangelical who has long been moving toward Catholic spirituality, shifting from conservative evangelicalism to a tradition in which many in the church hierarchy hold similar complementarian views has caused me a certain inner dread. I found myself wondering if the roles of women and men in Catholicism, at least in a liturgical and hierarchical context, are much different from conservative evangelicalism.

In confronting me, my friend was essentially asking me how I would respond to the role of women in the church. It is not that I had not thought about this before my friend's challenge; rather, it simply reiterated a real problem for me: Why exchange one brand of Christianity for another with similar hang-ups? How could I reconcile my desire to become Catholic when I can simply stay put and work for change by living out my own calling as a writer and professor?

My answer, although perhaps unsurprising to many cradle Catholics, seems a bit ironic now, given the common evangelical misconceptions of Catholicism I once held. What drew me to Christianity in the first place was Jesus, but what I have been returning to as I move toward Catholicism is Mary, Mother of Christ, Mother of the Church, whom I have come to see as my own mother. If I am honest, this answer has shocked and embarrassed me. It is shocking because I never thought I would become Catholic, given the evangelical misconceptions of Mary I have bought into in the past. It is embarrassing because I have never had a bent toward mysticism until recently. Even though I am not a mother and have little desire to become one, it is the person of Mary who utterly fascinates and invites me into the Mystical Body of Christ. And even though she has been saddled with many identities used to oppress women, what strikes me most profoundly about Mary is how I am at an utter loss to pin her down.

The closest I have come to articulating my fascination with her personhood has to do with how profoundly human she is, how she stored the mysteries regarding God's incarnation in her heart, how she chose her course with dignity. Wendy M. Wright, a theology professor at Creighton University, articulates it best in a lecture she gave in 2010, "Mary and the Catholic Imagination: *Le Point Vierge*":

I have heard it said that Mary is such a rich, polyvalent, polyvocal symbol because of all the central symbols of Christianity, she is the least biblically well defined.... [S]he is within the faith community a point vierge, a liminal, in between reality where the diverse hopes and aspirations of many converge: a space where out of darkness hints of daylight begin to emerge.

Mary is hard to co-opt. She cannot be tied up in tidy, theological bows, and I love that about her. In my mind, what makes her most human is how she confounds my categories. People we cannot easily pin down are dangerous people in the best way and, in turn, have the most potential for realizing their fullest humanity: They choose based on their own God-given will. We never know quite what they are going to do with all that they hide in their hearts until they act. Because Mary is dangerous, she has for me become a symbol of the point at which the divine seems to meet flesh and bone, creating the Mystical Body of Christ. For me, she represents the unpredictable mystery of the human heart.

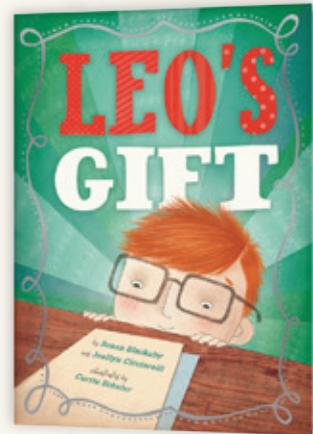
But it is not just Mary. Since I began to seriously consider a jump to Catholicism, I have read and read and read, and my reading list has been filled with women. I keep coming back to Dorothy Day, Flannery O'Connor, Mary Karr, Simone Weil, Wendy M. Wright, Sister Simone Campbell, Sister Joan Chittister, Jessica Mesman Griffith and others—strong mothers and sisters who challenge preconceptions about women and the mysteries hidden in their own hearts. In so doing, they shape conversations in the church. I long to stand among these women, with their ability to live in the tension between their own personhood and Catholic tradition. It seems no surprise to me now, no embarrassment, that it is this mystical body of writers and thinkers and their ideas that most convince me that Catholicism is where I belong.

So how do I respond to these women?

I sit at their feet. I listen and learn. From them I begin to understand what it means to become my most fully dangerous human self, created in the image of God, defying expectations of who others think I ought to be to become the person God created me to be.

Jennifer Ochstein is a Midwestern writer and professor who has published essays with Hippocampus Magazine, Evening Street Review, The Lindenwood Review and Episcopal Cafe, among other publications.

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‘Rosemary’s Baby’ and ‘The Exorcist’: A Devotion to Hope Amid the Horror

By Nick Ripatrazone



Photo: Getty Images

Films in the tradition of “Rosemary’s Baby” tap into the inherently dramatic and provocative elements of Catholicism.

the newspapers are on strike.” Guy, a struggling actor played by John Cassavetes, says the pope’s tactic is “showbiz,” and Roman continues: “that’s exactly what it is. All the costumes, the rituals—all religions.”

Rosemary, played by Mia Farrow, is quietly looking down at her plate. Minnie notices, and says they have offended her. Roman asks: “You’re not religious, my dear, are you?” Rosemary responds, “I was brought up a Catholic. Now I don’t know.” When Minnie presses, saying, “You looked uncomfortable,” Rosemary replies, “He is the pope.” Roman says, “You don’t have to respect him because he pretends he’s holy” and continues on about the “hypocrisy behind organized religion” in front of a clearly unsettled Rosemary.

It is not surprising to hear a lapsed Catholic’s tepid defense of her former faith in a Manhattan apartment in 1965. But this is no errant small talk. “Rosemary’s Baby”—the film that ushered in a new era in cinematic horror—is an intensely Catholic film. American horror is a God-drenched genre, and many of the essential films in the genre are explicitly Catholic. The culture, theology and symbolism of Catholicism is dramatized, made a source of nostalgia, exaggerated and parodied. Catholics might not go to Mass as much as they used to, but they are still scared of the devil. In Catholicism, evil is real.

Lapsed Catholics make for great stories. They have just enough of the old religion to remain superstitious, but are pulled away from practice

by doubt. Rosemary and Guy start the film with more earthly concerns. They have a new apartment, and talk vaguely of starting a family—although Guy’s acting career has stalled. Roman says Guy just needs “those initial breaks.” A break comes when the lead in a play mysteriously goes blind, and Guy gets the part. A television role soon follows. Rosemary, in comic unknowing fashion, tells a friend that Guy is “suddenly very hot.”

Guy apologizes for being too focused on his career, and they decide to have a baby. Their candle-lit dinner is interrupted by Minnie Castevet, who offers them homemade chocolate mousse for dessert. Guy gets rid of her, and although Rosemary hates the “chalky undertaste,” he is strangely adamant that Rosemary finish the gift. Drunk on cocktails and wine, drugged from the dessert, or all of the above, Rosemary sits dazed at the kitchen table while Guy hovers in front of a television set. It is Oct. 4. The New York Times and other city newspapers are still closed, but the pope is at Yankee Stadium.

It is against this papal backdrop—and Guy’s curious narration of “Christ, what a mob”—that one of the most infamous scenes in the history of horror films unfolds. Rosemary collapses, and Guy carries her into bed, where she begins to have hallucinations. Despite her paltry defense of the church early in the film, Rosemary is God-haunted in her visions. She has already dreamt about an aggressive nun and now

Early in “Rosemary’s Baby”—the classic horror film that will soon turn 50—Rosemary and Guy Woodhouse are eating dinner with their eccentric new neighbors. Minnie Castevet is nosy and forward. Her husband, Roman, a traveling businessman, talks religion at the table. It is September 1965, and Pope Paul VI will soon visit New York City—but Roman quips that “no pope ever visits a city where



One critic called “The Exorcist” “the greatest advert for Catholicism that the world has ever seen.”

Photo: Getty Images

imagines being on a yacht with those most royal American Catholics, the Kennedys. One of her friends—a man who warned her about the apartment building’s Satanic past—is not allowed on the boat. “Catholics only,” she is told.

As Guy begins undressing her in their bedroom, Rosemary’s visions shift to being naked in the Sistine Chapel, and then lying on a bed in a dark room. In a grotesque ritual, she is brushed with blood and surrounded by a chanting crowd. Men tie down her legs, and Guy appears to climb on top of her—until he is replaced by a beastly incarnation of the devil. Rosemary believes that her dream is

actually nightmarish reality, but then she sees Pope Paul VI walk toward her. He says, “They tell me you have been bitten by a mouse,” a play on Minnie’s pronunciation of the dessert. Rosemary says, “That’s why I couldn’t come to see you” at the stadium, and asks to be forgiven. The last thing she remembers is kissing the ring on the pope’s outstretched hand.

It is telling that the scene ends with a perversion of the sacrament of reconciliation—a pivotal scene that hinges on its audience’s nuanced understanding of Catholic guilt. The broadcast of the pope’s visit to the United States brings together the main themes of the film: guilt, fame

and ritual. The scene’s placement within the film, and even its structural progression, best makes sense through a Catholic ethos.

Released several years later, “The Exorcist” reached the same audience, but is a counter to “Rosemary’s Baby.” Although Father Damien Karras is burdened by doubt, his struggle ends with a moment of climactic grace. The critic Mark Kermode called “The Exorcist” “the greatest advert for Catholicism that the world has ever seen.” William Friedkin’s film is stylish without becoming baroque. Early shots of wind blowing the habits of nuns while they walk in front of the Georgetown campus complement the stirring, but

not overbearing, piano theme. In the movie, an actress named Chris MacNeil is shooting a new film on campus and rents a home nearby with her daughter, Regan. Unlike Rosemary, Chris and Regan are not Catholic. But their unbelief, and Regan's dabbling with a Ouija board, again serve as an invitation for evil.

Most of film's dramatic action takes place in the MacNeil home. Chris's drunk film director attacks her butler during a house party. Regan leaves her bed, walks downstairs and urinates in front of the guests—including an astronaut about to leave for a mission. She tells him, "You're going to die up there." Soon she is fully, violently possessed by the devil. The film's macabre actions stain the sacred space of a home, so Chris must do the unthinkable for an unbeliever: trust in God.

The drama of "The Exorcist" comes from the fact that God's vessel is the imperfect Father Karras, a severe-looking amateur boxer turned Harvard-trained psychiatrist. Although Father Lancaster Merrin, a veteran exorcist, is recruited for the job, he is old and frail. Father Karras must carry the fight, but is weighed down by his wavering faith—and the terrible guilt he feels over abandoning his sick mother. In "The Exorcist," Catholic grace—powered by Christ—ultimately breaks through the dark.

In the years that followed "Rosemary's Baby" and "The Exorcist," Catholic-themed horror films were legion. Certainly low-budget schlock went for cheap and heavy-handed scares at the expense of the church. But well-made, complex representations of Catholic culture, clergy and ritual regularly ap-

When God Arrives

By Philip C. Kolin

Let your eyes write
new tears for a pilgrimage
to a place you cannot see.

But wait
for the thick darkness.
That is when he will call

for you.
Till then quiver your soul.
Forget about being

in his image.
You will only be looking
into a blindfolded mirror.

He lives in infinity, and his voice is
an octave higher than silence.
His words thrum

through the clouds.
He whispers fire and speaks
in endless vowels.

He comes with a river bird
asperging feathers.
Pray for the sky that absorbs

evaporating continents
and black-plumed sins.
As his train goes by,

you realize you do not
have to wear
your body anymore.

Philip C. Kolin is the University Distinguished Professor of English (Emeritus) at the University of Southern Mississippi, where he edits the Southern Quarterly. He has published eight collections of poetry, most recently *Benedict's Daughter: Poems* (Wipf and Stock, 2017).



In the years that followed “The Exorcist,” Catholic-themed horror films like “The Omen” were legion.

Photo: Getty Images

peared in theaters. The 1970s would see the Oscar-winning “The Omen,” “Alice Sweet Alice,” “The Sentinel” and “The Amityville Horror.” Catholic horror remained popular throughout the ’80s and ’90s, with films like “Evilspeak,” “The Unholy,” “Angel Heart” and “Stigmata.” The trend has continued into the 21st century: “The Exorcism of Emily Rose,” “The Conjuring 2” and the recently released “The Blackcoat’s Daughter,” set on the campus of a Catholic school.

The appearance of a crucifix or a priest in a horror film does not make it Catholic. Rather, films in the tradition of “Rosemary’s Baby” and “The Omen” tap into the inherently dramatic and provocative elements of Catholicism. Ironically, the line from Rosemary’s hallucination about the yacht party being for Catholics only speaks to a perception of Catholicism as an American other, a religion of immigrants. Catholicism is visceral, palpable, tangible. It is a religion focused

on the flesh and faith of the body, and Catholic Mass is a sustained performance of aural and spiritual transformation.

The theology in Catholic horror films is often tenuous. The church is often stereotyped. Yet the pull of Hollywood toward Catholicism is significant, and should be seen as an opportunity for reflection. Of all the genres of film, Catholic storytelling has made its widest, most consistent mark upon horror. Its portrayal of good and evil as both symbol and substance has made for storytelling that lasts long beyond the end credits. Whether practicing or lapsed, Catholics tend to be tattooed with their faith. Catholicism is a culture illuminated by ritual and deepened by tradition. The horror film genre is the perfect laboratory for Catholic storytelling. Fear and faith are inextricable.

Near the end of “Rosemary’s Baby,” Rosemary holds an issue of Time magazine while in a doctor’s of-

fice waiting room. The infamous cover asks: “Is God Dead?” Horror films offer a powerful, often disturbing dramatization of that question. Horror forces us to confront the evil in our midst. In “The Exorcist,” Father Merrin thinks the devil’s true goal is to make us “reject the possibility that God could love us.” The devil wants us to give in to despair. Whatever the outcome on the screen, a Catholic approach to horror means a devotion to hope even in the face of our worst fear.

Nick Ripatrzone has written for *Rolling Stone*, *The Atlantic*, *The Paris Review* and *Esquire*. His newest book is *Ember Days*, a collection of stories.

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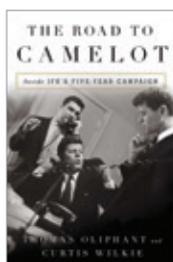
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When asked to describe himself, Kennedy told a reporter, "I like to think of myself as a practical liberal."

On the campaign trail with the ghost of J.F.K. By James R. Kelly



The Road to Camelot
Inside JFK's Five-Year Campaign
By Thomas Oliphant
and Curtis Wilkie
Simon & Schuster.
448p \$28

The Road to Camelot is an insider's book, written for outsiders, on what it was like to be an insider during the totally unexpected five-year quest of John F. Kennedy to become the 35th president of the United States at the seemingly un-presidential age of 43. The authors' view from the inside both enlightens our minds and darkens our spirits. Insiders know that the road to political success is full of swerves, deceptions and deceptions.

The authors—Oliphant, a Pulitzer Prize winner, and Wilkie, a professor of journalism at the University

of Mississippi—were longtime prominent journalists covering politics at *The Boston Globe*. They cheerfully acknowledge that they are not historians, but they do cite all the readily available Kennedy histories and provide at the end of the book 361 footnotes for their insiders' sources. For Oliphant and Wilkie, the writing of the political required the personal. From their days at *The Globe*, they knew personally many of Kennedy's political associates and insiders, including Ted Sorensen, the brothers Ted and Bobby Kennedy, Eugene McCarthy, Tip O'Neill, Walter Mondale, Adlai Stevenson and others.

These details point to a key characteristic of the book: its abundance of the day-to-day political news between 1955 and November 1960, which is both off-putting and intrinsic to keeping the general reader's interest. The benefit of their fast-paced, breathtaking delivery of detail is that the authors manage to

make the outcome we already knew into something freshly exciting. For those looking for a detailed account of the distrust, deviousness and deceptions of political infighting in the context of the incipient importance of television, this book is for you. For those who still want to believe that a two-term J.F.K. presidency would surely have led to an American Camelot, this book is not for you.

Kennedy's first congressional campaign was in 1946. Among his numerous obstacles, name recognition was not one. *Life* magazine had covered his wedding to the beautiful socialite Jacqueline Bouvier, and the newlyweds were interviewed by Edward R. Murrow. In 1952 he won a U.S. Senate seat. He then astonished his Senate colleagues with his out-of-nowhere bid for vice-president, hoping to appear on Adlai Stevenson's ticket in 1956.

Oliphant and Wilkie's thorough-

ness results in honest depictions. As a senator, Kennedy initially was not a strong voice on civil rights. His opposition to Sen. Joseph McCarthy was muted. He disagreed with a suggestion by Stevenson to end the military draft. Kennedy and his ever-growing think tank knew that the crowded way to Camelot had to be a back road with many bypasses—that is, one through the independent local precincts and not through the national parties. Larry O'Brien, the electoral strategist, was given the task of overseeing the payment of the local toll price, thus securing the loyalties of sheriffs and county leaders by funneling cash under the guise of “campaign expenses.” Without Joe Kennedy Sr.’s multi-millions from his Prohibition days, there would be no road to Camelot.

On the campaign road there were occasional respites, and for Kennedy they provided time for philandering, which the authors note in disillusioning detail. They cite Ted Sorensen (whom Kennedy called his intellectual lifeblood), who said that J.F.K. self-indulgently gave in to carnal temptations when they became available, even while knowing that their inevitable ultimate disclosure could diminish the moral force and credibility of his presidency.

The authors note that when he started his covert run for president in 1956, Kennedy was essentially a blank slate on the principal questions of the day. When pushed on why he should be president, J.F.K. once replied, “It’s not that I have some burning issue to take to the nation. It’s just, ‘Why not me?’”

What he did have in abundance was good looks, quick intelligence, affability, charm and wit. When pressed

to say whom he was rooting for during an Iowa City campaign stop at the Notre Dame versus University of Iowa football game, he said he would “cheer for Iowa and pray for N.D.” In the first political campaign to use television commercials, the telegenic J.F.K. quickly absorbed the pertinent: that message and appearance are linked; that short declarative sentences trump knowledgeable verbosity; that makeup improves appearance; that under harsh stage lights, blue shirts are better than white.

His pursuit of gravitas was much abetted in 1957 when some backroom dealing landed him a front-row seat on the Foreign Relations Committee. His speech on the Senate floor on July 2, 1957, brought him the floodlights of notoriety that ambition required. He took on the Republican and Democratic establishments on the issue of colonialism. He criticized the Eisenhower administration’s complicity with France and Great Britain and insisted that the United States should not see ex-colonial nations’ neutrality in the Cold War as opposition.

These critiques did not by themselves make Kennedy’s gravitas progressive. He called contemporary colonialism a loser’s game, and the competitive Kennedys had no sympathy for losers. So it was no surprise that in 1957, when the Soviet Union launched Sputnik, the first satellite to orbit the planet, Kennedy immediately supported upgrading the American military and sided with the position that there was a missile gap that needed to be closed.

When asked to describe himself, Kennedy told a reporter, “I like to think of myself as a practical liberal.”

After much hesitation he supported universal hospital coverage financed through the Social Security Administration’s payroll tax and proposed that the federal government send money directly to local school districts to help fund operating costs, but not directly to parochial schools. In his 10-minute speech on Sept. 12, 1960, on the issue of American Catholic independence from papal authority before the hostile Greater Houston Ministerial Association, Kennedy spoke with perfect American diction: “If the time should ever come—and I do not concede any conflict to be remotely possible—when my office would require me to either violate my conscience or violate the national interest, then I would resign the office.” On the question of how religion influenced the vote, Oliphant and Wilkie judiciously conclude that, while Kennedy’s Catholicism lowered his voting percentage (49.72 percent to Nixon’s 49.55 percent), it increased his Electoral College numbers (303 out of 537).

While the authors display a deep interest in the ways Kennedy’s Catholic affiliation affected the presidential outcome, they show no interest in how, or whether, his Catholic faith affected his presidential judgments. Only here do Oliphant and Wilkie remain the contented outsiders.

In all matters J.F.K., a close look reveals more wrinkles. Years after his death, in a letter to Sorensen, Jacqueline Kennedy described him as “that unforgettable elusive man.”

James R. Kelly is an emeritus professor of sociology at Fordham University.

Why do they dislike us?

Over the past 20 years, travel abroad has become the hallmark of a certain breed of middle-class, university-educated American. But the noted journalist Suzy Hansen's *Notes on a Foreign Country* is not an *Eat Pray Love*-style tale of self-discovery. With curiosity and humility, Hansen offers the sobering yet optimistic story of a young American coming to grips with her country's political and social impact around the world.

She learns about Turkey's post-Ottoman nation-building as a secular state under Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, a construction of a new nation from a tabula rasa that mirrors the United States' own beginnings. She also learns of systematic American efforts to create a new world order after World War II, involving eco-

nomic and military interventions, coups, mistrust of leaders suspected of communist tendencies (like Egypt's Nasser and Iran's Mossadegh) and support for leaders (including corrupt, brutal dictators and religious extremists) who promised to be anti-communist.

One theme that runs through the entire book is that of the inevitable rise of modernity, which Hansen recognizes as one of the most deeply rooted assumptions of the American mind. But through her travels and contact with others (who she usually finds know much more about the United States than she knows about their countries), Hansen ultimately must face her own tacit assumptions of exceptionalism and superiority.

Though her initial response involves a certain amount of shame, she quickly moves beyond this to more posi-

tive responses: a genuine desire to listen to the people she meets, humble recognition that "the American dream may have come at the expense of a million other destinies" and deep gratitude for "the world's unending generosity."

Written with compassion and a deep thirst for justice, this book is a must-read for anyone struggling to make sense of the rapidly changing time we live in—one in which, no matter how much our nation's leaders continue to assert themselves, American hegemony is being ever more called into question.

Jeannine M. Pitas is an assistant professor of English and Spanish at the University of Dubuque in Iowa. She contributes to the Catholic blog Vox Nova.

Questioning the castle doctrine

Caroline Light describes herself as "a historian who studies the ways in which collectively shared memories—the histories that take shape as truth in the public imagination—influence national belonging." The imagined public truth Light takes on in this timely book hardly begins (or ends) with the killing of Trayvon Martin, an unarmed black teenager, by an armed member of a neighborhood watch group, on Feb. 26, 2012, in Sanford, Fla., but it is the event that brought her topic to national attention. In 2005 Florida became the first of 33 states to enact stand your ground laws. S.Y.G. laws typically expand the historic reach of the "castle doctrine" (the right in English common law to self-defense on

one's own property) beyond domestic boundaries and offer immunity from prosecution to those judged to make a reasonable claim to having felt threatened. George Zimmerman, Martin's killer, became the poster child for stand-your-ground laws.

The problem, according to Light, is that the very people most likely to need the protection of such laws, vulnerable and stigmatized minorities, including young black males, are not only the people least likely to enjoy that protection in practice, but are also the most likely to be perceived as the threats that justify white men standing their ground. Light makes her argument by way of rich historical cases from two centuries, troubling statistics (Americans represent 5 percent of the world's population but own 40 percent of its guns) and a critique of "a vast ideolog-

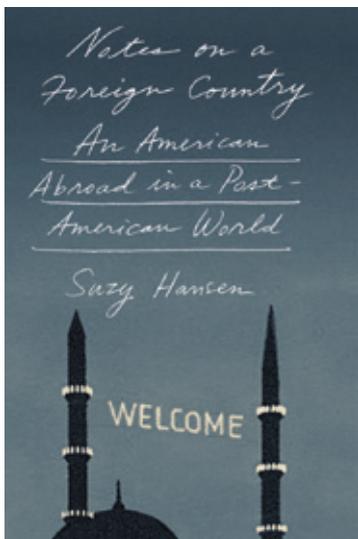
ical matrix built upon racist, heteropatriarchal, and capitalist privilege, intended to protect the white castle, at all costs."

All in all, it is a compelling and deeply disturbing argument, but I fear some who most need to hear it will invoke the pre-S.Y.G. "duty to retreat" when threatened by such language. For those with a tolerance for it, this is an indispensable look at a dark side of American history and culture. In the dominant imagined public truth, some people belong more than others.

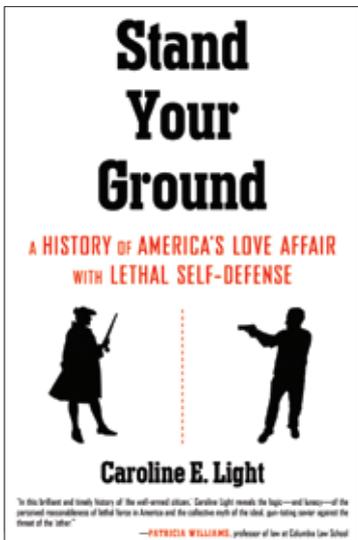
Roger Bergman is emeritus professor of Justice & Peace Studies at Creighton University and the author of Catholic Social Learning: Educating the Faith That Does Justice.



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Notes on a Foreign Country
An American Abroad in a
Post-American World
By Suzy Hansen
Farrar, Straus and Giroux. 288p \$26



Stand Your Ground
A History of America's Love Affair
With Lethal Self-Defense
By Caroline E. Light
Beacon Press. 240p \$12

The disenchanted legionnaire

What drives a man to fight and die for a country not his own? Jean-Vincent Blanchard tackles this question in his lyrical history of the French Foreign Legion. Formed in 1831 to enlist foreign nationals, the Legion conducted perilous missions in North Africa, Southeast Asia and elsewhere.

Blanchard rightfully situates the Legion within the shameful history of colonialism. As he shows, the Legion was not only key in leading military conquests, but in laying the groundwork to extract labor, resources and political fidelity later.

The history also serves as a biography of Gen. Hubert Lyautey, who often commanded the Legion. Born to aristocrats and trained by Jesuits, Lyautey hoped the French Army could help stabilize a politically turbulent country. Campaigns took him, with his “taste for adventure and the exotic,” from Algeria to Vietnam, Madagascar to Morocco. He professed profound admiration for the lands and peoples he dutifully subjugated.

Blanchard also portrays figures who crossed paths with the Legion, like Blessed Charles de Foucauld. Blanchard’s de Foucauld is a holy man who tended to the needs of the “spiritually dispossessed” legionnaires but was also implicated in the ills of colonization.

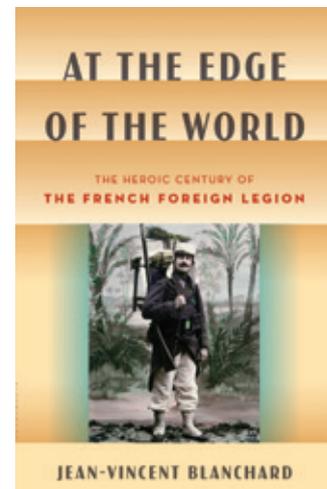
Passages explore the legionnaire of popular imagination: a troubled outcast lured to faraway landscapes, where he proves fearless and loyal. Blanchard tries to unravel how this image was partly truthful and partly contrived.

Blanchard also brings to light a historical paradox. The disenchanted legionnaire is a byproduct of the contradictions and failures of European modernization, yet he brazenly risks his life abroad for that same project of modernity.

The book’s weakness is that it is not always clear where the author stands. The Legion was responsible for colonial atrocities, Blanchard concludes, but he approvingly suggests legionnaires were men who defined heroism, masculinity and camaraderie.

Parsing history leading to the World Wars, we can better understand the dilemma of legionnaires who felt they no longer belonged in the modern world. But we cannot endorse their legend, steeped as it is in blood.

Ryan Richardson is the office operations manager of America.



At the Edge of the World
The Heroic Century of the French Foreign Legion
By Jean-Vincent Blanchard
Bloomsbury. 272p \$30



Watching ‘The Walking Dead,’ and sleeping with one eye open

But if you go on biting and devouring one another, beware that you are not consumed by one another.

(Gal 5:14-15)

The survivors in zombie stories have every right to be paranoid. The zombies are out to get them, and in “The Walking Dead,” the popular AMC television series that begins its eighth season this month, so are the living. It is a world in which, in addition to avoiding the undead, people must also contend with humans who have sunk below civilized behavior in order to survive. Every day the survivors must face unknowns with some kind of hope.

Religion is not absent in “The Walking Dead,” but it is hardly presented as a recourse for people in extreme crisis. With few notable exceptions, characters with faith have been weak and ineffective. As one character tells another early in the series, perhaps laying out the show’s theology, “Feel free to believe in God, but the thing is, you gotta make it okay some-

how. No matter what happens.” The implication being that, God or no God, you are on your own.

Whatever its estimation of religion, the series, intentionally or not, provokes at least one profound religious question: Can paranoia and religion—Christianity, specifically—co-exist? In this series, it seems, where faith carries little weight, the answer is no. In the extreme paranoia in which no member of the undead (and few living) can be trusted, Christianity proves an ineffectual weapon—a point that recurs regularly. Who is your neighbor? In a zombie world, the good Samaritan would be toast.

Paranoia is vital in the post-apocalyptic world of this series, where survival does not allow for the niceties of “turn the other cheek” or the meek inheriting the earth. Zombies signify the fragility of the social compact and the kind of chaos that awaits the breakdown of society, a calamity sometimes threatened by the other—that which we fear, hate or do not understand. Zombies embody all kinds of fears, from nuclear war and racial unrest to

a shopping cart of “isms” and suspect groups.

In the real world, the relationship between Christianity and paranoia seems disturbingly equivocal. On this side of the TV screen, survivalists are already preparing for the fall of civilization. Among the less extremely paranoid, eccentric fears play out in many ways, in rhetoric, legislation and sometimes outbreaks of violence—building walls, figuratively or literally. For those who are looking, contemporary America seems to offer an ever-expanding list of occasions for social or political paranoia: police brutality, health care, L.G.B.T. issues, religious extremism, gun violence, terrorism. The paranoid do not see conflicting opinions; they see an evil other victimizing them. They accept conspiracy theories based on the most unusual and slim evidence. By its nature, paranoia abhors Christian charity, yet many Christians seem to be infected with it as they confront the other in their midst.

Prophetic or not, “The Walking Dead” is a parable in which fear and



Religion is not absent in “The Walking Dead,” but it is hardly presented as a recourse for people in extreme crisis.

hatred are all-consuming, and paranoia serves the survivors. Like all parables, it is a looking glass—a particularly chilling one—for the “real world,” where, for followers of Jesus Christ, the second greatest commandment, “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Mt 22), is not supposed to be optional. It may be impossible to love as Jesus did—most certainly if one is plagued by paranoia—but it is a hopeful ideal. This kind of hope would probably fail people contending with the undead, but for us, it should be an antidote for the paranoias that divide our world. It may require the courage of the show’s survivors.

I may not, as St. Peter admonishes, use “The Walking Dead” as my “explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope,” but I will continue to watch. And I will try to continue to try to cling to “Love your neighbor” and hope that in the end it doesn’t come back to bite me.

Patrick Gallagher lives in Aberdeen, South Dakota, where he works for a community development nonprofit.

A farmer and prophet

We have largely forgotten a way of life in which Americans defined themselves by community, family, craft and religion. I was reminded of this watching Laura Dunn’s documentary, “Look & See: A Portrait of Wendell Berry,” which brings its viewers into the landscape, both interior and exterior, of the author, farmer and environmental activist.

The film tells Berry’s story without interviewing him on camera. Instead, you hear the sound of footsteps as an unseen person walks through the hills or around the farm. You get to know some of the people Berry loves: his wife and collaborator, Tanya, his daughter, Mary, and his fellow farmers.

Though Berry is a Protestant, he embodies Catholic social teaching on economics. He is an advocate of well-distributed private property and small farmers who know and love their land. The film does not, however, vilify the hardworking farmers caught up in the agribusiness model. If anything, the viewer empathizes with them as they describe not being able to sleep at night, up to their ears in debt.

Some viewers might find Berry’s insistence that the “money economy is not the only economy” overly idealistic. I found it true. Markets may not value my great grandmother’s quilt-making or my sister’s murals and gardening or the fact that my eldest sister has chosen to be a nurse practitioner in the poorest county in the state or anything that does not make sense from a purely economic point of view: having children, caring for an elderly family member, volunteering, caring for the earth. Yet from a Catholic point of view, maximizing one’s profits can never be the only goal.

One of Berry’s primary subjects, the decimation (both social and environmental) of rural America, is not interesting, perhaps, to those who consider rural America “flyover country.” But now more than ever we need his prophetic voice to help us find our way back home.

Anna Keating co-owns Keating Woodworks, a handmade furniture studio. She is the co-author of *The Catholic Catalogue: A Field Guide to the Daily Acts That Make Up a Catholic Life*.

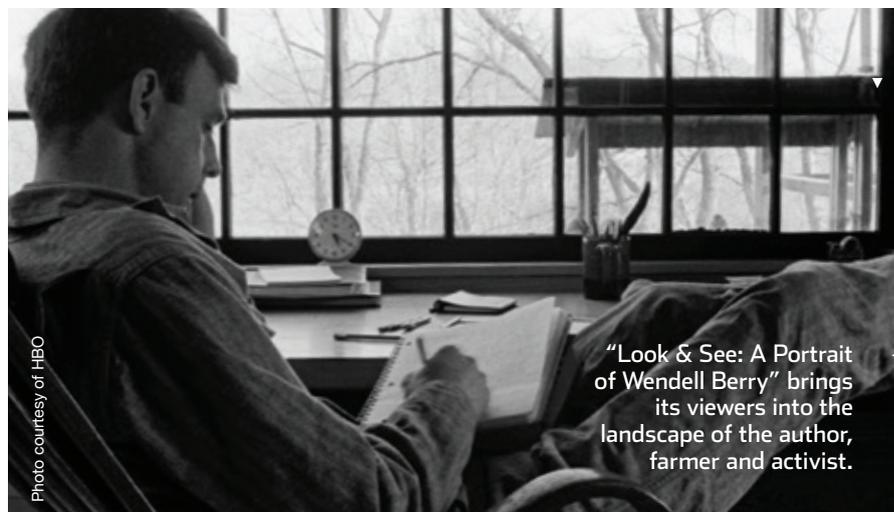


Photo courtesy of HBO

“Look & See: A Portrait of Wendell Berry” brings its viewers into the landscape of the author, farmer and activist.

Accountability From Above

When it comes to drones casualties, knowing ‘how many’ is not enough

Recent reports have noted that the Trump administration is preparing to relax some limits on the use of drones in counterterrorism missions. Five years ago, the editors argued forcefully that even the limits now being relaxed were wildly insufficient. They called for international norms governing armed conflict to be revised to govern drone warfare directly, rather than continuing to treat it as an exception that steps around usual limits on the use of force.

Drone warfare presents new challenges to the way the United States wages war. Under President Obama drone attacks have become the characteristic way this country fights terrorism. The United States now routinely employs drone attacks in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia and Yemen....

Drone strikes are now conducted out of the White House, with the president himself approving targets. The president's direct role in this process is problematic. The head of a democratic state should have distance from the application of force, both to avoid the risk of international prosecution for wrongful use of force and also to ensure that those professionally responsible for the control of force are accountable to a system of military justice and international humanitarian law. To that end, the Law of Armed Conflict needs to be updated to include issues of counter-terrorist drone warfare, and intelligence services routinely engaged in antiterrorist attacks should be made subject to it.

Another practice requiring closer attention is that of signature strikes, so-called because facts on the ground, particularly the presence of fighting-age men, are taken as a “signature” of terrorist activity and therefore of a legitimate target. Without further on-the-ground intelligence, however, it is hard to know whether such clusters are made up of convinced terrorists or mere bystanders. So the conventions of military ethics that make those who actively threaten the United States legitimate objects of direct attack are stretched in a way that will inevitably

result in the deaths of nonthreatening civilians. Clearer restraints on signature attacks are necessary.

The targeting of alleged terrorists also raises questions of extrajudicial killing of suspects without due process.... The authority and conditions for killing suspected terrorists must be clarified in both U.S. and international law. U.S. antiterrorist law ought to reflect John Adams's proposition that ours must be a government of laws, not of men.

•••

Already world public opinion has come to resent the freedom with which the United States employs drone strikes in its antiterrorist campaign. At the same time, more than 50 countries now possess drones.... The proliferation of drone technologies and the growing risk of their use by rogue regimes and terrorist groups point to the urgent need for an international convention to set standards for the use of drones in cross-border operations.

Absent an international convention, U.S. interest lies in upholding international standards for nonintervention even as diplomats work in the long term to adapt international law to the reality of combat with non-state actors, like Al Qaeda. Given the proliferation of drone technology, American exceptionalism in its application will be short-lived. The United States can better advance its long-term security with a global compact than without one.

Editorial, July 16, 2012

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Whom Do You Serve?

Readings: Is 45:1-6, Ps 96, 1 Thes 1:1-5, Mt 22:15-21

King Herod and his sons were not the most pious of Jews, but they scrupled to mint coins that conformed to biblical laws forbidding human or divine images. Herodian coins of Jesus' day displayed abstract designs and brief inscriptions of the coin's weight and year of mintage. This was not the case with the coins necessary for Roman taxes, which circulated alongside the others. Each carried a portrait of the emperor on the front and a relief of the goddess Roma on the back. Each bore the inscription "Tiberius Caesar, eminent son of the divine Augustus; high priest."

These coins troubled many Jews. Their imagery violated the Torah. Their inscription was a blasphemy that affirmed the divinity of emperors and the validity of pagan worship. Their widespread use was a reminder of Roman domination. Whether or not a faithful Jew could use such an object provoked fierce debates.

Some Pharisees try to trap Jesus in this debate. "Is it lawful to pay the census tax to Caesar or not?" The Pharisees did pay the tax. They drew a belief from texts like our first reading that authority was God's gift. Just as God had once handed Cyrus the Persian authority over Israel, God had now mysteriously handed authority to the Romans. The Pharisees begrudgingly obeyed them until the day when God would send the messiah. Not so the Zealots, who believed that God would send a messiah only after Israel proved its fidelity through defiance. Zealots resisted the tax and rose up against it on at least one occasion (Acts 5:37). Jesus' cleansing of the temple (Mt 21:12-17) probably caught Zealot attention, and now Jesus' opponents saw an opportunity to connect him to this outlaw movement.

By drawing attention to the coin, Jesus sidesteps this trap. Coins reinforced Roman domination through ideology. Their use implied that it was the emperor, the son of a god, who rewarded labor and provided daily bread. It was Tiberius Caesar, the high priest, who secured blessings for people of the empire. Even though many could look beyond these claims, no one could deny that Roman wealth

'Show me the coin that pays the census tax.' (Mt 22:19)

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

What sovereigns do you repay?

Which of their images do you carry?

How can you strive for the gifts that come from faith?

secured status and power for any who could accumulate it.

"Then repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God." Matthew's sly implication, that Jesus was not carrying any Roman coins but that his opponents could produce one without trouble, reveals the depth of their collusion. In Jesus' mind, their possession of such coins revealed not just a love of wealth but a deeper reliance on false power and a commensurate weakening of faith in God.

Christ's disciples today are subject to similar false powers. Many struggle against a reliance on ideologies or systems that demand much but offer repayment only with shadows of the gifts that come from God. These sovereigns can confer social status but not community, power but not trust, wealth but not fulfillment, pleasure but not joy. By contrast, God, who requires only our faith, provides the love of family and friends, the wisdom to reveal the kingdom in every place, the power to bind up broken hearts and a life that triumphs even over death.

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



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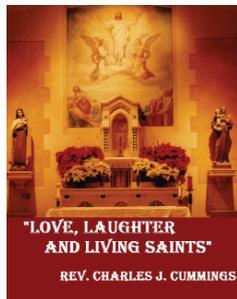
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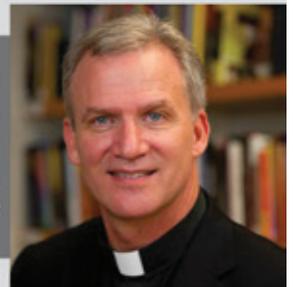
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Awe and Devotion

Readings: Ex 22:20-26, Ps 18, 1 Thes 1:5-10, Mt 22:34-40

Greek thinkers valued brevity. They believed the simplest statements expressed the purest truths. A well expressed phrase could epitomize an entire philosophical system. Plato summed up the thought of his teacher Socrates, for example, with an ancient, two-word proverb: *gnothi seauton*, “Know thyself.” Israel developed similar motifs after centuries of contact with Greek thought. Although Israelites had always valued concise proverbs, thinkers of Jesus’ day also developed Greek-style “wisdom summaries” of Israelite teaching. One famous story relates that a pagan man challenged the esteemed Rabbi Hillel to teach the entire Torah while he stood on one foot. As the man lifted his foot, Rabbi Hillel said, “That which is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow. That is the whole of the Torah. The rest is commentary: Go and learn.”

It is such a wisdom summary that Jesus’ opponents demand today. “Which commandment in the law is the greatest?” Jesus turns to Scripture, drawing the first part of his response from Dt 6:5 and the second from Lev 19:18. These were probably texts that had inspired him throughout his ministry, but his response was also shrewd. By using God’s own words, Jesus offered his opponents little to refute and gave his sympathetic listeners a religious outlook both vigorous and elegant.

‘The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments.’ (Mt 22:40)

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

What has God done for you that draws your wonder and gratitude?

How do you live out Jesus’ simple words in your life?

Modern readers might not feel the same inspiration. Authentic love cannot be commanded; it is given freely or not at all. The covenantal language of Deuteronomy and Leviticus assumes such freedom. When the books of the covenant speak of love, they speak of something that emerges from feelings of wonder. Israel beheld with awe the appearance of God on Sinai and God’s care for them through 40 years in the desert. God’s people were astonished by such grace and expressed their gratitude with acts of service and devotion. When Israel followed God’s laws and addressed their prayers only to him, they expressed through such actions the kind of love Jesus commands today. When later generations recited the accounts of these wonders, they kindled in their own hearts the awe their ancestors felt, and they too sought out acts of service and devotion to express their gratitude.

Part of Israel’s genius was to find in fellow humans a similar source of devotion. The nation was strongest when Israelites bore each other’s burdens and held each other in high esteem. Prophets struggled to maintain this ethos, and its collapse heralded invasion and exile. The survivors of these catastrophes recognized a miracle in the life of each Israelite. They expressed their gratitude for the nation’s survival in an awe-inspired love for neighbor as well as God.

Jesus turns this love toward the whole human race. He draws on Deuteronomy’s protection of foreigners for the seeds of this teaching, but his commandment makes it universal. Every human life is a miracle. Every display of love that we receive should transfix us with awe and inspire a response of the deepest generosity. Christ dreams of a church so loving that it holds the world spellbound in wonder and reveals a God whose mighty deeds are worthy of profoundest devotion. Those who live out Jesus’ simple words bring this dream to fulfillment.

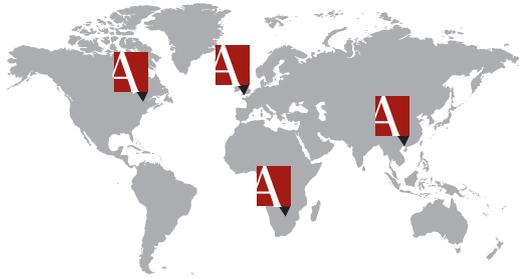
Michael Simone, S.J., teaches Scripture at Boston College School of Theology and Ministry.

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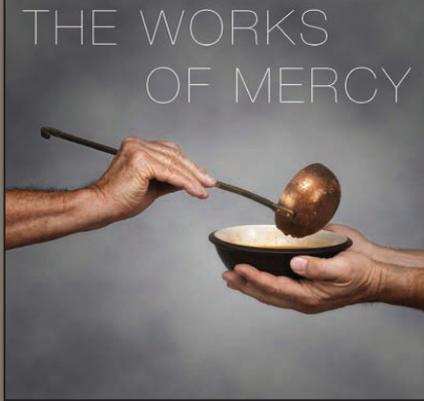
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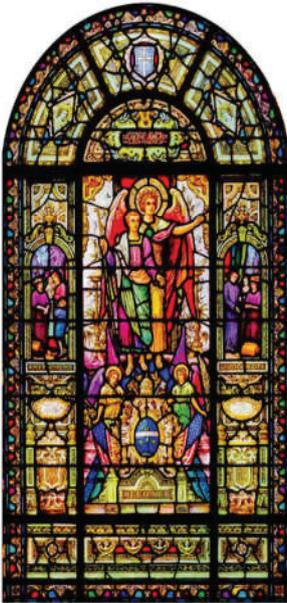
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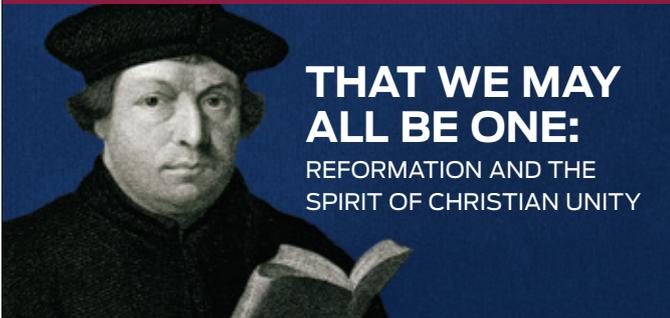
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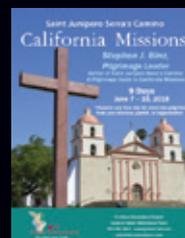
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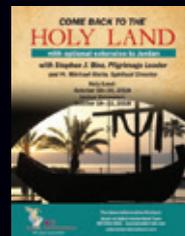
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Saying No to Violence

Catholic women in abusive relationships now have a champion in Pope Francis

By Christauria Welland



I recognized the desperate tone in Elizabeth's voice as soon as I picked up the phone. Just last year, she had completed a 12-week group therapy program I pilot at our parish for Latina victims of domestic violence. When I last saw her at Mass, she had a new boyfriend and was eight months pregnant. Now that she has given birth, she reveals that he slapped her. While storming out, he assured her he would be coming back to take away their newborn daughter and to have Elizabeth deported.

Elizabeth wants police protection, but with all the recent news about victims of domestic violence being deported when they contact the police, she is terrified that she will be sent back to Mexico, like other immigrants with no criminal record. Who will take care of her 10-year-old son and her new baby?

In the past, I would have had no hesitation in assuring her that police officers are trained to respond compassionately to victims of domestic violence, regardless of the victim's immigration status. But in 2017, I honestly do not know what will happen. Every day we hear of arrests and rapid deportations of non-criminal undocumented human beings, here in California and all over the nation.

I have worked with the Latino/a community in San Diego since 1990, both in ministry and as a clinical psychologist. I am painfully aware of the

constant anxiety and hostility that openly meet the immigrant and the refugee. And yet many Catholics speak of the "invasion of our country." The love of Christ in the Gospel was greater than this. He told us so clearly, "You did it to me." Can we really make ourselves deaf to a message that rings out so thunderously, from the Torah through the Gospels? Welcoming the stranger and the needy is not heroic; it is what we are called to do as Christians.

I tell Elizabeth I will call the police myself to find out their current policy. The dispatcher assures me that my client will not be reported to ICE if she calls the police. Later, they come and help her to put a restraining order in place.

Congress passed the Violence Against Women Act in 1994, and an updated, improved version in 2013, which provides "lifesaving services for all victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking—including Native women, immigrants, L.G.B.T. victims, college students and youth, and public housing residents."

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month. It is also Right to Life Month. These two priorities lie on the same continuum: All life is sacred. In his deeply insightful commentary on spousal love in "The Joy of Love" (Nos. 54, 104), Pope Francis speaks forcefully:

I think particularly of the shameful ill-treatment to which women are sometimes subjected, domestic violence and various forms of enslavement, which, rather than a show of masculine power, are craven acts of cowardice. The verbal, physical, and sexual violence that women endure in some marriages contradicts the very nature of the conjugal union.... If we must fight evil, so be it; but we must always say "no" to violence in the home.

For those of us who dedicate our lives to the peace and well-being of families, these words are an answer to decades of prayer. Catholic women tortured by partner violence who have for so long felt forgotten by the church now have a champion who unhesitatingly supports them. Let us accompany them in their suffering, work together on their behalf and reach out with the lived message of the Gospel: Love one another as I have loved you...

Christauria Welland is a clinical psychologist in San Diego. In 2015 she founded Pax in Familia, an international organization to improve pastoral responses to violence in Catholic families.

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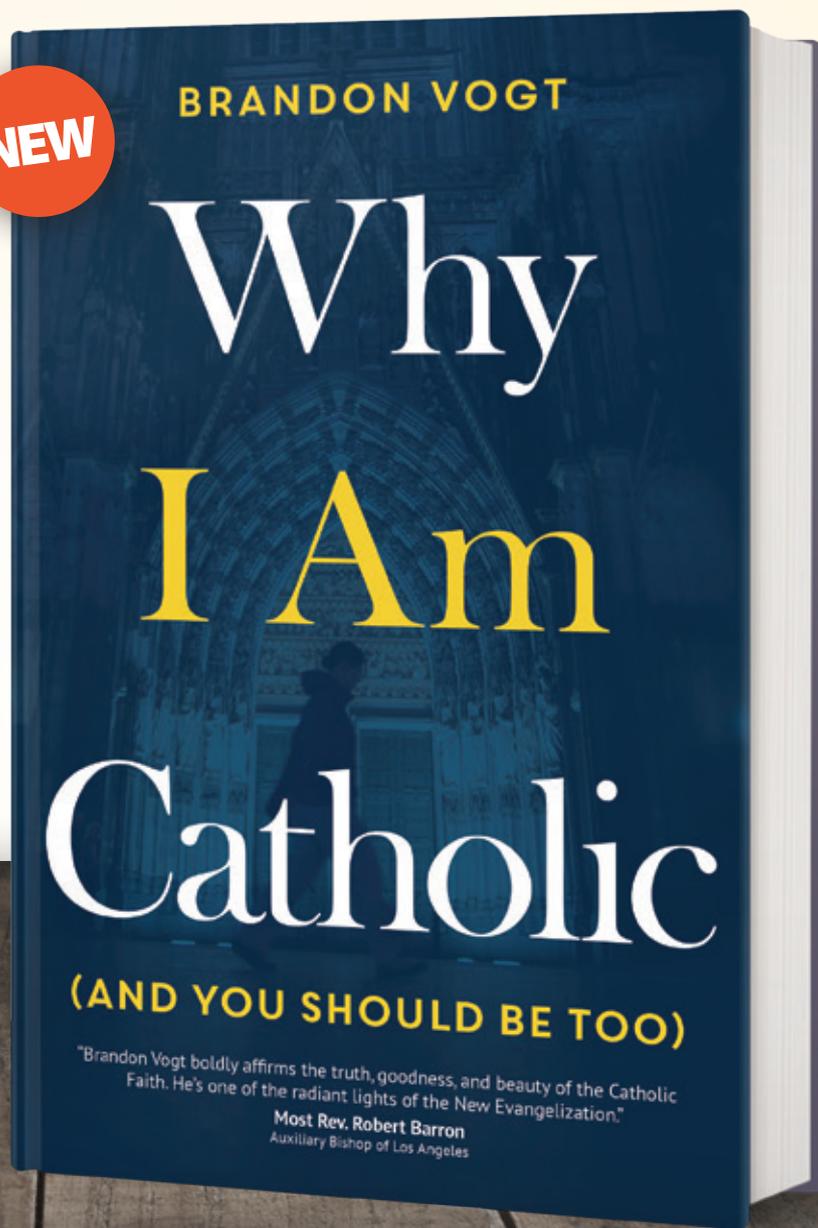
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