

America

JANUARY 2024

THE JESUIT REVIEW OF FAITH AND CULTURE

A PARENTING MAP

The case
for richer
models of
family life

Holly Taylor Coolman

p18



David Neuhaus:
War Is a Defeat
for Everyone

p34

How to Prepare
for the 2024
Election

p66

Television
1950-2000,
R.I.P.

p46

**WHAT
HAPPENED
AT THE SYNOD?**

A special deep-dive episode
of 'Inside the Vatican'

americamagazine.org/podcasts



We are grateful for each and every donor and subscriber who supports our Jesuit media ministry.

Thank you for trusting the **America** team to bring you meaningful and timely stories and conversations about faith, culture, and politics through a Catholic lens.

As you may know, subscriptions alone do not cover the cost to produce our magazine and our video and podcast content, so we are dependent on the generosity of our loyal readers to bridge that gap with charitable donations.

On behalf of the Board of Directors
and all the entire America Media staff—thank you!



Why We Hope for More Than We Can Plan For

One year ago, I wrote my first official “Of Many Things” column as editor in chief, reflecting on **America’s** interview with Pope Francis, which we had conducted with him in the Santa Marta residence only a few weeks earlier.

This year, my attention is drawn farther back. This January issue marks a transition in our board leadership. Susan Braddock and Peter Howe, who have respectively served as chair and vice chair of the board for America Media since 2017 and as board members since 2014, are handing their leadership responsibilities over to Michael Zink and Grace Cotter Regan.

It is hard to express how much of an impact their board service and leadership has had on America Media as an organization, but remembering where we were in 2017 can provide an illustration. Starting in January 2017, in the space of just over a month, America Media: launched our fully redesigned print magazine (this was the moment when “Our Take,” “Your Take,” “Short Take,” and “Last Take” were born); relaunched our website under a completely new and finally mobile-friendly design; and moved out of our old headquarters, which meant both that the offices relocated to temporary space while our current office was being finished and that the Jesuit community moved into its new home.

Susan and Peter were both champions, as board members, of the ambitious strategy—what my predecessor, Matt Malone, S.J., described as America’s “Moonshot” program—by which America Media would grow and invest, finding new audiences, subscribers and support to carry this ministry into the future. Their vision in embracing that strategy is why they took on leadership positions on the board beginning in 2017, and it is that strate-

gy that they have helped shepherd and guide over the past seven years.

To continue the illustration, here are a few things **America** did not yet have in January 2017: podcasts (“Jesuistical” would premiere in March); a daily email newsletter reaching over a hundred thousand people and a website reaching over a million people a month; a digital subscription, which only three years after its 2021 launch has already grown to half the number of our print subscribers and is still growing; and daily Scripture reflections, which I hear about often from subscribers as part of what they love about **America** and depend on us for.

Some of those things were already planned and hoped for in those days when we were moving the office and rebuilding the website. We knew we wanted to invest in audio opportunities, and I probably annoyed my colleagues—I had joined the staff in 2015 and led the website redesign—to no end by reminding them that “web-scale numbers have at least seven digits.” But the digital subscription was not in our plans back in 2017, and I had to be talked into greenlighting daily Scripture reflections even more recently. And of course, none of us could have expected that we would be working, and thriving, in a permanent hybrid office arrangement.

Hope and vision require planning, but they are never reducible to strategy and execution alone. Often enough, hope is realized more fully in adapting to unforeseen circumstances and opportunities than in achieving exactly what was originally planned. Or to put it in scriptural terms, “hope that sees for itself is not hope. For who hopes for what one sees?” (Rom 8:24).

Of course, St. Paul in Romans 8 is not giving counsel about organization-

al planning. His scope is far greater, challenging us to remember that the promise of our redemption is not for us alone, but in fact is a promise for all of creation, “groaning in labor pains even until now” (Rom 8:22). Hope that sees only from its own perspective does not hope boldly enough, because it cannot fully imagine how radically God is at work to renew creation.

In my first year as editor in chief, I have been asked many times what my plans are for the magazine, and I have tried to answer as best I can. And as the church is committing itself to the synodal path Pope Francis has marked out, I have also been asked fairly often about what Pope Francis plans for the church. As I tried to say in last month’s “Of Many Things” column, I think that question misses the mark, because the synodal process is more focused on what is necessary for us to cooperate together in the mission God has given the church than on implementing any particular plan.

But another way to put that might be to say that a mere “plan” could never be hopeful enough to respond to the gift God gives us in the mission of the church. The mission, after all, was never solely ours, but always God’s, with a scope and a vision that exceeds and transforms our own.

At the beginning of a new year, and a new moment in America Media’s mission, it is good to be reminded that we have been entrusted with a hope bigger than our own plans. Please join me in praying in gratitude for Susan and Peter’s fidelity to that hope over their years of leadership on our board, and for Michael and Grace as they take up that charge.

Sam Sawyer, S.J.



THE ISSUE

GIVE AND TAKE

6

YOUR TAKE

Responses to Cardinal Blase Cupich on the future of Jesuit higher education

8

OUR TAKE

The economy's image problem

10

SHORT TAKE

'Why do I stay?' A young Catholic feminist on a church plagued by scandal
Delaney Coyne

DISPATCHES

12

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING 'DERAILS' IN CANADA

Assisted death numbers on the rise around the world

GoodNews: An afternoon program for refugee and migrant children in South Africa

Christians caught in the crossfire in southern Lebanon

Catholic leaders endorse a continuing U.S. campaign to contend with H.I.V. and AIDS

FEATURES

18

CHARTING A NEW PATH

Richer models of parenting can expand our imagination
Holly Taylor Coolman

26

SOUL SUPPORT

How one nonprofit works to serve the needs of clergy abuse survivors
Eve Tushnet

FAITH & REASON

34
WARS END IN DEFEAT
FOR EVERYONE
A reflection on Gaza
David Neuhaus

FAITH IN FOCUS

40
SEARCHING FOR THE
HOLY DIRT
'Doing what you're doing'
on the way to El Santuario
Joe Hoover

44
The holiness of asking for help
Cynthia-Marie Marmo O'Brien

IDEAS

46
TELEVISION 1950-2000, R.I.P.
Television as a popular medium
died 25 years ago. It's time to
mourn.
Robert David Sullivan

BOOKS

52
*Renewing Theology; Katharine
Drexel and the Sisters Who Shared
Her Vision; Small Isn't Beautiful;
Encounters in the New World; La
Duchesse; Seeing With the Heart*

The memorial of the Rev. Maxim Andre of
the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts, in
Kalaupapa, Hawaii. More than 8,000 people
died here from leprosy (now called Hansen's
disease), including St. Damien of Molokai.

THE WORD

64
Discerning the Unseen World
Victor M. Cancino

LAST TAKE

66
BILL MCCORMICK
How to prepare for the 2024
elections

POEM

61
THE GRAIL QUEST
Amit Majmudar

63
ABYSSFISHING
Amit Majmudar

How Jesuit universities can stay true to their identity

“It is my contention that those in leadership positions in Jesuit Catholic universities live in three worlds: the *university world*, the *Catholic world* and the *Jesuit world*,” wrote Cardinal Blase J. Cupich of the Archdiocese of Chicago in an essay published online in September at americamagazine.org, exploring how Jesuit universities can hold true to their mission. The essay explores the opportunities and challenges for educational leaders as they navigate and integrate these worlds, and it elicited spirited responses from our readers, including some of the educational leaders Cardinal Cupich addresses. The full text of the responses can be found at [Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education magazine \(conversationsmagazine.org\)](http://conversationsmagazine.org).

The Spiritual Exercises can ground us

If I could prescribe only one practice for non-Jesuits to bolster the progress of the mission at their respective schools, along with their own personal development, it would be an active and ongoing engagement with the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola. I know several presidents and vice presidents who have “made the Exercises,” as we say, whether that happened through the traditional 30-day retreat or by the 19th Annotation, and most of them did so after assuming their posts. All of these leaders speak of the experience as life-changing and continue to draw on the graces received.

The ultimate aim of the Exercises is a deeper and more authentic relationship with Jesus Christ: “Here I shall ask for interior knowledge of the Lord, who became human for me, that I may more love and follow Him” (*Spiritual Exercises*, No. 104). Of course, that interior knowledge of the Lord always brings with it a greater interior knowledge of the self as well.

Cardinal Cupich notes that “leaders must know who they are to take up the work of ongoing renewal.” The Exercises provide the ideal opportunity for bringing this dynamic into being.

Beyond that, a dedicated experience of the Spiritual Exercises puts essential things into perspective and yields a higher comfort level in making tough decisions. As senior leaders have seen time and again, decisions usually come down to choosing between goods rather than good or evil. The latter choice is easy, or at least it should be. The former is enlightened and made less daunting by the graces of the Exercises.

And so for presidents and other leaders in today’s turbulent yet powerfully creative realm of Catholic and Jesuit higher education, I am convinced that an authentic engagement with the Spiritual Exercises, for both Catholics and other Christians, will not only be more impactful for their personal lives and professional tenure but for the vibrancy of the mission of the schools they serve and the hard decisions they must assuredly make.

Joseph Marina, S.J., is president of the University of Scranton.

Amid plummeting trust, the church needs witnesses

Reflecting on Cardinal Blase J. Cupich’s thoughtful suggestions for strengthening the identity and mission of Jesuit Catholic universities, I am drawn to the “creative tensions” in the interplay between the expectations and demands of the “three worlds” university leaders must navigate: the university world, the Catholic world, and the Jesuit world.

Why does it seem so difficult, in so many settings, for the university world to receive the dynamism of the rich intellectual and spiritual traditions of the Catholic world?

One challenge for bringing these worlds into fruitful dialogue in university settings is that so much of our work falls into the terrain of a plummeting trust in institutions. Further, with our church torn asunder by devastating political polarization, we can no longer assume that the resources of Catholic social teaching will be received without cynicism and skepticism. How might we meet the challenge, as Cardinal Cupich puts it, to communicate “the fullness of the church’s teaching in a positive light”?

The observation of Pope Paul VI remains an incisive guide: Our colleagues and students listen “more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if [they do] listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses.” For those who ground their work in the spiritual and intellectual resources of Catholic traditions, and who find insight and energy to delve into the difficult challenges of our day, we may wish to explore how to cultivate vulnerable spaces to share our stories of personal and intellectual transformation.

A witness to the application and concrete connections between the teachings and traditions and one’s work for cultural transformation can often serve as a sure sign of the hope to which we are called.

Amy Uelman is the director for mission and ministry and a lecturer in religion and professional life at Georgetown Law, as well as a senior research fellow at Georgetown’s Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs.



Graduates of Regis University in Denver are seen during their commencement on April 30, 2022.

CNS photo/Brett Stakelin courtesy Regis University

An ongoing project grounded in faith

The cardinal's linking of renewal with awareness is especially suggestive. In our work with faculty and staff colleagues, as we mount calls for mission-driven renewal, it is essential that we work to elevate our communities' awareness of our heritage and tradition, so as to enable meaningful appropriation and embodiment of our mission.

With regard to embodiment, I would suggest both an individualized sense in which we as professors and administrators model a kind of personal fidelity to mission, and also a collective sense of the campus community as embodying core ideals and values in the ways we come together, especially in moments of crisis, and in the kinds of cultures we build and sustain together on our campuses. The cardinal is right to linger on the curriculum as a particular resource and one where we might do even better.

Underlying all is the matter of faith as foundation and catalyst at Jesuit, Catholic universities. Two brilliant and now departed Boston College theologians and colleagues came to mind as I reflected on the cardinal's insistence on the centrality of faith to all our commitments. The Rev. Michael Himes, on the occasion of our university's sesquicentennial, proposed that "whatever humanizes, divinizes" is a fundamental precept of the Catholic intellectual tradition

as embodied in the Catholic university.

Fifteen years earlier, the Jesuit intellectual Michael Buckley, S.J., in his masterful "The Catholic University as Promise and Project," centered the Jesuit, Catholic university on a core and enlivening pursuit of truth. As Buckley wrote at the end of the last century, "It is of vital importance that the church encourage, demand, propose, and foster every serious engagement by which human dedication and its consequent effort engage itself with an enterprise whose purpose is truth and whose natural climate and institution is the university."

The Cupich essay resonates for many reasons. It reminds us of our privileged call to work with faculty and staff colleagues and our students in the pursuit of truth and transcendence.

It insists on a turn to the imagination, even in our work as administrators. As with Father Buckley, we are called to see our universities as ongoing projects, and our work as inspired by the life-giving promise that lies at the heart of the Catholic faith.

David Quigley is the provost and dean of faculties for Boston College.

The Economy Is the Issue—but Does Anyone Have a Way to Improve It?

Most voters think the economy stinks, and that perception will play a major role in the 2024 election. But while economic dissatisfaction is widespread, it is much harder to say what policies will “fix” the economy—because other than anxiety about continuing inflation, there is little consensus about what precisely is broken.

In a New York Times/Siena College poll released in November, 52 percent of all registered voters in six political battleground states said that economic conditions in the United States were “poor,” with another 29 percent calling the economy “only fair.” Among voters under the age of 30—one of the groups most supportive of President Joe Biden in the 2020 election—59 percent said the economy was poor and 34 percent said it was only fair. That represents an almost unanimous sense of pessimism among those new to the workforce.

Well aware that voters hold the president responsible for the economy, Mr. Biden has repeatedly argued that “Bidenomics Is Working,” especially in job creation but also in bringing inflation down from its post-pandemic high. The Biden administration also points to a healthy increase in the gross domestic product in 2023, a sign of a continued recovery from the depressing effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.

But even the best economic metrics do not automatically resolve the concerns of citizens, who may be seeing and experiencing things that are not easily measured by the nation’s Bureau of Economic Analysis.

In another recent poll, by the The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research, almost 80 percent of Americans said their household debt stayed the same or rose last

year, with only 15 percent reporting a rise in household savings. Some of this debt may be the result of Americans buying big-ticket items after waiting out the pandemic—consumer spending overall grew significantly last year, at least until a slowdown in October—but one in four households reported medical debt, and more than a third of Americans under 30 have student loan debts.

The most basic expense of all, housing, also continues to rise, in part because of the Federal Reserve’s continued policy of high interest rates—but also because of chronic undersupply of new housing. Mortgage rates are at a 23-year high, and the median monthly home mortgage payment was \$2,155 in September, up by 11 percent in a single year, according to the Mortgage Bankers Association. And rising rents, by one measure up 28 percent since the start of the pandemic, mean that alternatives to homeownership are not attractive options. (Increasing the supply of new housing would bring costs down, but that is largely controlled by state and local governments rather than determined by federal policy.)

There are also troubling signs that the overall economic recovery is not reaching all Americans. The poverty rate for children in the United States more than doubled in 2022, to 12.4 percent, after pandemic assistance, including an expanded child tax credit, was allowed to expire. In that same year, the percentage of U.S. households experiencing food insecurity rose by nearly three points to 13 percent (and jumped to 33 percent in households with children headed by a single mother).

Mr. Biden apparently realizes that “stay the course” may not be an effec-

tive economic message as he seeks re-election, so he has admitted that “prices are still too high for too many things.” In November, he blamed corporations for “price gouging” even after their own production costs have gone down and “supply chains have been rebuilt” after the pandemic. This may or may not be a winning strategy; with the exception of gasoline, the prices of basic consumer goods tend not to fall once they have gone up, and *deflation* can cause a new set of problems, including decreases in production and employment.

The cost-of-living squeeze is a significant source of economic anxiety, but there is no way to summarily reverse cost increases. Instead, there is a need to discuss the policies and priorities that could actually help more people benefit from growth in the G.D.P.

The most practical ideas for addressing these issues—like the expansion of the child tax credit discussed above—involve spending money to assist those who are most in need. But discussion of such policies usually founders on the false idea that the government should be run like a household, pinching every penny, without recognizing that financial support for people who are *already* pinching every penny actually helps generate both economic activity and security.

Political leaders, journalists and voters should also consider the trade-offs of economic change. As mentioned above, too much pressure to keep consumer prices low can lead to unemployment or fewer people earning a livable wage. The United Auto Workers’ strike of last year was part of a growing wave of labor victories, securing higher wages and better working conditions for members of the

working class. If car prices go up slightly as a result of these higher wages, or if Starbucks charges more for coffee because its workers unionize for better benefits, the country as a whole could still be better off. (The Associated Press reported that hourly wages increased at a slightly higher rate than prices last year.)

If more workers feel confident enough to reject terrible jobs, we should be thankful. And even if the Federal Reserve Bank worries that a low unemployment rate may contribute to inflation, we should take into account the social and economic benefits of increased participation in the workforce.

That brings us back to the question: How should voters evaluate the economy when they go to the polls? And how do we, as a country, identify what needs attention?

As always, we must consider the most vulnerable members of society. That means making sure that basic necessities are affordable for all families but showing judgment about how to keep down prices—that is, not by holding down the wages of the people who manufacture goods and provide services, and not by increasing our dependence on goods from countries with low pay and even forced labor.

The economy is not the only issue—and not the most important issue—in the 2024 election, which will also turn on basic commitments to constitutional democracy, as well as questions about immigration policy and the American response to the conflicts in Ukraine and between Israel and Hamas. But many voters will focus on more day-to-day concerns, and how they will pay the bills is chief among them. It would be foolhardy for either political party to dismiss these concerns, or to tell voters that there is nothing to worry about. Instead, they should start a conversation about what actually needs to be done.

Editor in Chief Sam Sawyer, S.J.
President Traug Keller

Deputy Editor in Chief Maurice Timothy Reidy
Executive Editors Sebastian Gomes
Ashley McKinless
Kerry Weber
Editor at Large James Martin, S.J.
Production Editor Robert David Sullivan
Senior Editors Kevin Clarke
James T. Keane
J.D. Long-García

Senior Director of Digital Strategy and Subscriptions Zachary Davis
Creative Director Shawn Tripoli
Poetry Editor Joe Hoover, S.J.
Vatican Correspondent Gerard O'Connell
National Correspondent Michael J. O'Loughlin
Associate Editors Molly Cahill
Colleen Dulle
Ricardo da Silva, S.J.

Audio Producer Maggi Van Dorn
Studio Production Associate Kevin Christopher Robles
SEO Associate Jillian Rice
Contributing Writers Simcha Fisher
Nichole M. Flores
Cecilia González-Andrieu
Rachel Lu
John W. Miller
Kaya Oakes
Nathan Schneider
Valerie Schultz
Eve Tushnet

Contributing Editors Robert C. Collins, S.J.
Patrick Gilger, S.J.
William McCormick, S.J.
Paul McNelis, S.J.
Michael R. Simone, S.J.
Russell Pollitt, S.J.
Jake Martin, S.J.
Ian Peoples, S.J.
Regional Correspondent Ryan Di Corpo
Special Contributor Kevin Spinale, S.J.
Editor, The Jesuit Post Delaney Coyne
Outreach Managing Editor Christine Lenahan
Moderator, Catholic Book Club Michael O'Brien
O'Hare Fellows

V.P. of Finance and Operations Siobhan Ryan
V.P. of Advancement Heather Trotta
Executive Office & Advancement Manager Cynthia Hornblower
Development Manager Alessandra Rose

Senior Director of Business Development and Creative Services Kenneth Arko
Account Manager Lindsay Chessare
Advertising Services Manager Geena Di Camillo
Vice President of Sales and Marketing Lisa Manico
Human Resource Consultant Barbara Meehan
Business Operations Staff Glenda Castro
Rashana Francis
Jonathan Tavarez
Bianca C. Tucker

Editor Emeritus Francis W. Turnbull, S.J.
Chair, Board of Directors Michael G. Zink

americamagazine.org 1212 Avenue of the Americas, 11th Fl.
facebook.com/americamag New York, NY 10036
twitter.com/americamag America Press Inc. d/b/a America Media ©2024

‘Why do I stay?’ A young Catholic feminist ponders a church plagued by scandal

Oct. 25 was my 23rd birthday, a Wednesday, which I celebrated working at my desk in the **America** newsroom. The pope had given an intervention at the synod decrying clericalism as a “whip...a scourge...a form of worldliness that defiles and damages the face of the Lord’s bride.”

My colleague Colleen Dulle wrote on Twitter that Francis’ intervention implied clericalism’s particular hurt to women who are “continu[ing] with patience and humility, enduring the contempt, mistreatment and marginalization from institutionalized clericalism.”

Twenty minutes later, we heard that the Rev. Marko Rupnik, a credibly accused sexual abuser and former Jesuit, had been incardinated in his home diocese in Slovenia. The diocese put out a statement explaining that for now “Rupnik enjoys all the rights and duties of diocesan priests.”

My first thought: “Why do I, a young woman and a feminist, stay in a church mired in scandal?”

Two days later, on Oct. 27, the Vatican admitted that there were “serious problems in the handling of the Fr. Marko Rupnik case” and lifted the statute of limitations on his alleged abuses to allow a review process to take place. That is all well and good—I pray that justice is done—but it does not change the fact that Father Rupnik’s case is an all-too-familiar instance of the ugliest kind of clericalism.

Far more harmful than young priests trying on lace surplices and cassocks, which the pope included in his intervention at the synod, clerical sexual abuse and our church’s failure to stamp it out is a threat to the legitimacy of the church for future generations. It is also a threat to the church’s mission today.

For young Catholics, the sexual abuse crisis has always loomed close. In May of this year, my best friend from my Jesuit high school, St. Ignatius, sent me a 696-page report released by the Illinois attorney general about clerical sexual abuse in my home state. My first instinct was to type in the name of my school. Twenty cases of priests with credible abuse allegations who worked at my high school appeared; six of those cases occurred at the school itself.

I was heartbroken by each instance of abuse, each act of violence and manipulation that took place in the school I had come to know so intimately. Yet, although I was devastated, I ought not be surprised. After all, a church stained by scandal is all I have ever known.

None of those 20 Jesuits ever taught at St. Ignatius while I was there; many died before I was born. Nevertheless, as I scrolled through the report, above me loomed the reality of sexual abuse in my church.

St. Ignatius is the school where I first began to forge a relationship with God. That place, and the church more broadly, inspired my love of theology; it is where I first began to glimpse my vocation as a writer. Even amid all this brokenness, both St. Ignatius and the Catholic Church are holy places to me. Because I love them, I must fight for them to be better.

Listen to Victims

Addressing a problem deeply rooted in the clerical structure of the church demands that the laity and women religious be part of the solution. It is our duty as a church to listen to survivors and let their testimony guide us, even (and especially) when it makes us uncomfortable.

In September, former members of the Loyola Community (the Slovenian women’s religious community whose members Father Rupnik is accused of abusing) released a statement decrying the Diocese of Rome’s report on the Centro Aletti, the art and theology school Father Rupnik founded. They argue the report “ridicules the pain of the victims, but also of the whole church, mortally wounded by such blatant hubris.”

The women also lamented Pope Francis’ September meeting with Centro Aletti director Maria Campatelli: “That meeting granted by the pope to Campatelli in such a friendly atmosphere was thrown in the faces of the victims (these and all victims of abuse); a meeting that the pope denied them.”

After Pope Francis reopened the Rupnik case, the women described it as “an appropriate step for the truth to be recognized.” But it has taken far too long for these victims’ voices to be heard.

In an interview translated by The Pillar, an Italian former religious sister going by the pseudonym “Anna” detailed how Father Rupnik abused his role as her spiritual guide in Slovenia and Rome. She said that he manipulated her faith to coerce her into sexual acts. When she threatened to complain, Anna said, Father Rupnik replied: “Who would believe you? It’s your word against mine: If you talk, I’ll make you look like a lunatic.”

Anna alleges that when she went to Father Rupnik’s spiritual advisor, Tomas Spidlik, S.J., he refused to hear her confession and even drafted a letter for Anna to be released from her vows as a religious sister. In 1994, Anna brought a request for the dispensation of vows—which included a de-



nunciation of Father Rupnik’s abuse—to the archbishop of Ljubljana. In 1995, Father Rupnik was appointed director of Centro Aletti.

It is a vicious clericalism that protects credibly accused abusers over the people they are ordained to serve. To address this, ordained and lay leadership should share responsibility for overseeing the sexual abuse crisis. In a 2020 piece in *The New York Times*, Elizabeth Bruenig observed that perhaps the Vatican report on the investigation into ex-Cardinal Theodore McCarrick is “as remarkably unflinching as it is precisely because it was written by a layperson.” Ms. Bruenig wrote that “lay participation in accountability processes is crucial, because laypeople provide a perspective less entwined with the interests of the church hierarchy, and because trust and transparency are sorely lacking in the church.” Allowing greater lay oversight provides a new perspective to address what is broken in our church.

The final report from the Synod on Synodality includes a proposal to allow women to judge all levels of canonical disputes. This is a strong start. However, laypeople cannot be true collaborators in the church’s mission if the church does not hold clerics accountable for such grave violations of their authority.

As my colleague Molly Cahill wrote in 2020, “The very language that attempts to empower lay leadership should not also be used to let the current clerical leadership of the church off the hook.” Increasing lay oversight cannot be effective without a hierarchy willing to use its power to address these gaping wounds in our church.

Not only should victims be heard; as a church, we should aim to be transformed by their testimonies and the spirit of truth working within us. The forgiveness Christ preached from his cross is not some abstract sense of mu-

tual goodwill. It is a restoration of right relationship. We need *metanoia*: repentance, a change of heart and mind.

It is a spiritual sickness that has allowed the rot of sexual abuse to fester within God’s church. Any structural changes we make will be insufficient if our hearts are not changed as well. The question posed by Pope Francis in his 2013 homily at Lampedusa about migrants is pertinent to the sexual abuse crisis as well: “Has any one of us wept because of this situation and others like it?”

In my darkest moments of doubt, I sometimes wonder if the critics are right—if my place as a young feminist in the church is nothing more than a kind of Stockholm syndrome. Have I fallen in love with the very thing that is holding me captive? Friends have told me that learning about the insidious reality of sexual abuse destroyed their faith in the church. Although it breaks my heart that they have left the church, I cannot entirely blame them. It has shaken my faith, too.

But I stay—because after those dark moments, I think of how the church has given me sacred glimpses of the spirit of truth, “which the world cannot accept, because it neither sees nor knows it” (Jn 14:17). I am reminded that, even amid great evil that obstructs that sacred truth, there is something *here*. In this holy and broken church there exists a spirit in whose veracity I have unwavering faith.

It is the actions of flawed human beings that make me question whether I belong in this church; it is the voice of God that lovingly calls me back to it. I dream of a church that works for justice in the world. The work of making that dream real must start by promoting justice within our own four walls.

Delaney Coyne is a Joseph A. O’Hare, S.J., fellow at *America*.



Assistance in dying: 'Canada is an example where the system can derail'

By Miriane Demers-Lemay

On March 10, 2021, Andrée Dubord was taken to a hospital in Quebec City. Diagnosed with colon cancer, she was told by doctors that she must undergo surgery, after which she would have to live with a colostomy bag that would need to be emptied each day. Declining the operation would mean serious complications. That evening, she turned down both options and applied for medical assistance in dying.

The next day, Laurence Godin-Tremblay, her granddaughter, was at her bedside when a doctor strode into the room. "11 a.m. tomorrow?" he suggested.

Ms. Godin-Tremblay was stunned to learn that her 89-year-old grandmother was being scheduled to receive aid in dying in just a few hours. The doctor explained to family members that Ms. Dubord's application had been rapidly accepted and approved and that the speed of the decision was intended to alleviate the patient's "fear of suffering."

The following morning Ms. Dubord passed away after receiving a lethal injection. In an entry in a book of condolences left for the family, one of her friends wrote that Ms. Dubord "didn't want to disturb anyone."

Ms. Godin-Tremblay wonders if the loneliness her grandmother felt during the Covid-19 pandemic contributed to her decision to seek assistance in dying. Almost two years later, she still struggles to mourn the loss of her

grandmother. Everything happened too fast, she said.

Medical assistance in dying in Canada, known by its abbreviation MAID, "was [first] proposed as an exception," said Ms. Godin-Tremblay, a professor at the seminary for the Archdiocese of Montreal who is completing her doctorate in philosophy. Now, "even my 19-year-old brother said he was going to apply for MAID when he gets old. It's becoming the norm, as if it's the new way to die."

The rush to the conclusion of an assistance-in-dying application experienced by her family is not unique.

"It has become increasingly common for a patient to apply for MAID, get approved and receive the procedure on the same day, all within a span of 24 hours," said Leonie Herx, an associate professor of palliative medicine at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, during hearings in 2022 of the Canadian Parliament's Special Joint Committee on Medical Assistance in Dying.

Assistance in dying was originally limited to adults experiencing intolerable suffering, whose condition was characterized by an advanced and irreversible decline in capacity and who were on a trajectory to natural death. But in 2021, Canadian legislators extended eligibility to people whose natural death was not reasonably foreseeable.

On March 17, 2024, after several postponements, individuals suffering with mental illness will also become

eligible to apply for MAID. And in the province of Quebec, a new law intended to be implemented by 2025 expands access to aid in dying for individuals with severe physical disabilities or major neurocognitive disorders, like Alzheimer's disease, who will be allowed to make "advance requests" for MAID.

"New ethical issues are emerging with each expansion of the law," said Jasmin Lemieux-Lefebvre, coordinator of the advocacy network *Vivre Dans la Dignité* (Living in Dignity). "There is a lack of consensus regarding the inclusion of mental disorders in MAID. Various experts are raising concerns and saying, 'We're not ready at all [for the broadening of the law] with the waiting time for mental health care.'" He explained that Canadians seeking psychological services may have to wait many months before receiving help.

The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops has denounced these latest expansions of MAID eligibility, particularly the inclusion of people suffering from mental illness. In an open letter to the Canadian federal government last May, the Canadian bishops said:

It is even more objectionable when the government extends euthanasia/assisted suicide to individuals whose mental condition may predispose them to suicide, especially since it is known that health care across Canada is failing to provide accessible and reliable treatment for patients living with mental health challenges including mental illnesses. To enable or assist in the suicide for these patients directly contradicts national suicide prevention strategies and reneges on our collective social responsibility.

The issue is likely to remain contentious for the church in Canada. Supporters of assistance in dying are planning a court challenge that would oblige government-funded Catholic medical facilities to perform assistance in dying on site. The current practice allows MAID patients to be transferred to other institutions before the lethal procedure.

A survey in October found that 58 percent of Canadians believe that religiously affiliated institutions should not be required to provide MAID services, but it also found less support for expressions of individual conscience among health care providers. Seven in 10 say a doctor morally opposed to MAID should be required to make a referral if a patient asks for a medically assisted death.

Health ethicists in Canada are beginning to raise questions about the thoroughness of MAID oversight and

mechanisms to protect vulnerable populations. Many are concerned that the limited capacity of mental health services and lack of housing and other social supports seem to have been the primary drivers of decisions to seek aid in dying.

"Since Bill C-7," an amendment that expanded eligibility, "we've seen countless cases in the media and in our doctors' offices of individuals seeking and obtaining Medical Aid in Dying because they can't access essential [social] support, including palliative care, home care and care for people with disabilities," Dr. Herx said. "There are significant disparities in access to palliative care across the country, especially in rural and remote areas."

Dr. Herx testified that only about half of Canadians have access to the palliative care they need and said that the quality of that care remains uncertain. "Currently, Canadians are entitled to medical assistance in dying, but not medical assistance in living," she said.

Trudo Lemmens, the chair of the department of health law and policy at the University of Toronto's law school, is deeply concerned about how MAID has been instituted. "What we've seen in Canada is unique in the world," he said. "Canada is an example of how the [assisted suicide] system can derail."

"We're starting to normalize the [assisted] end-of-life as a solution to problems that could be approached differently," he said. "Ending someone's life can be cheaper than providing timely access to quality mental health care and quality home care. [But] there is something deeply problematic when society, including philosophers, justifies [assistance in dying] as a form of compassion and relief."

He argued that Canadians need to confront the weaknesses being exposed in the country's social safety net, especially for vulnerable populations like people who face disabilities or mental illness, or Indigenous communities, which experience high rates of suicide.

In 2022, more than 13,000 people received assistance in dying in Canada, accounting for 4.1 percent of all deaths, an increase of over 30 percent from 2021. In Quebec, MAID accounted for almost 7 percent of deaths between April 1, 2022, and March 31, 2023.

As the number of MAID approvals mount, they have been accompanied by many cases that raise concerns. In an article published in the medical journal *Palliative and Supportive Care* in 2023, four medical and ethical experts discussed a number of problematic experiences related to MAID. A former soldier and Paralympics participant from Quebec, Christine Gauthier, has been trying for five years to have a wheelchair ramp installed at her home. She testified that her caseworker from Veterans Affairs Canada suggested aid in dying instead of the home modification.

Alan Nichols, who suffered from a hearing and cognitive disability, had been experiencing recurrent episodes of depression. He was able to apply for MAID. His family was informed just four days before his assisted death but were unable to persuade officials to halt the procedure. The Associated Press reported that his MAID application listed only one health condition as the reason for his request to die: hearing loss.

Sathya Dhara Kovac, who at 44 had been living with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, hoped to carry on but opted for aid in dying because of a persistent struggle to receive home care assistance. She wrote her own obituary before accepting aid in dying. “Ultimately it was not a genetic disease that took me out,” she told loved ones, “it was a system.... Vulnerable people need help to survive. I could have had more time if I had more help.”

None of these cases were flagged in Health Canada’s internal reports as worrisome, according to the authors of the review Palliative and Supportive Care. They report that in Canada there is no reliable system for objectively or retroactively uncovering any errors or abuses in how assistance in dying is being practiced.

Asked about the risks of abuses in assistance in dying, a neurosurgeon and president of the Quebec Association for the Right to Die with Dignity, Georges L’Espérance, remains a confident supporter of the practice. “Considering the advancements, [the process] is completely fair, ethical, moral and legal, as long as we don’t let religious concepts hinder us,” he told **America**.

Most patients who pursue assistance in dying, he feels sure, have decided: “I’ve lived my life, I no longer find any joy in it.’ How can we justify ending life in suffering, pain and decay?”

But Ms. Godin-Tremblay is left wondering about contemporary Canada’s attitude toward life and death. “We live in a society where the weakest are seen as troublesome,” she said. “My grandmother had expressed her desire not to disturb people, and she made up her mind a long time ago. But she wouldn’t have bothered me. I would have liked to have been there for her.”

Miriane Demers-Lemay *contributes from Istanbul, Turkey.*

MAID in Canada

13,241 medical assistance in dying provisions were reported in Canada, accounting for **4.1% of all Canadian deaths** in 2022, more than 31% higher than numbers reported in 2021.

4,801 Quebec residents in 2022 opted for a doctor-assisted death—a **46% increase** from 2021.

6.6% of all deaths in Quebec in 2022 were from MAID—the highest rate in the country and the highest rate for assisted suicide in any jurisdiction in the world.

77—the average age of individuals at the time MAID was provided.

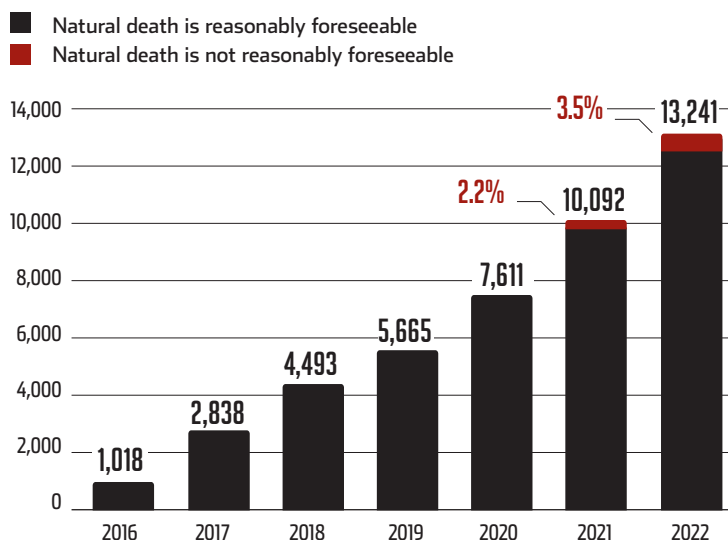
63% of MAID recipients in 2022 said cancer was their underlying medical condition, the most cited cause for seeking MAID.

44,958—the total number of medically assisted deaths reported in Canada since the introduction of federal MAID legislation in 2016.

Medical aid in dying, first established in the United States by the Oregon Death with Dignity Act in 1994, is legal in 10 states—California, Colorado, Hawaii, Montana, Maine, New Jersey, New Mexico, Oregon, Vermont and Washington—and the District of Columbia.

A NEW WAY OF DYING IN CANADA

This chart shows the total number of reported MAID deaths per year. In 2021, the first year that they were allowed, cases where a natural death was not “reasonably foreseeable” amounted to 2.2% of all MAID deaths. In 2022, that figure jumped to 3.5%.



Source: “(Fourth Annual Report on) Medical Assistance in Dying in Canada 2022,” Health Canada

GOODNEWS: In South Africa, finding the time to change a refugee child's life

"I never went to a movie until Three2Six took us. I never went to the zoo until Three2Six took us," says 24-year-old Debbie, a refugee from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. "Most of my childhood memories were made because of Three2Six."

Debbie came to South Africa as a refugee when she was 7. "I battled to see myself; I felt I was not good enough because I was a refugee child. Other kids could be kids, and I felt I couldn't." (The names of the young adults and children interviewed for this report have been changed to protect their identities.)

Responding to the plight of migrant and refugee children like Debbie and the obstacles they faced getting an education, Sacred Heart College, a Marist elementary and high school in Johannesburg, South Africa, launched the Three2Six Project in 2008. The project began as a program from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. daily at Sacred Heart, after the formal school day had ended for "regular" school children.

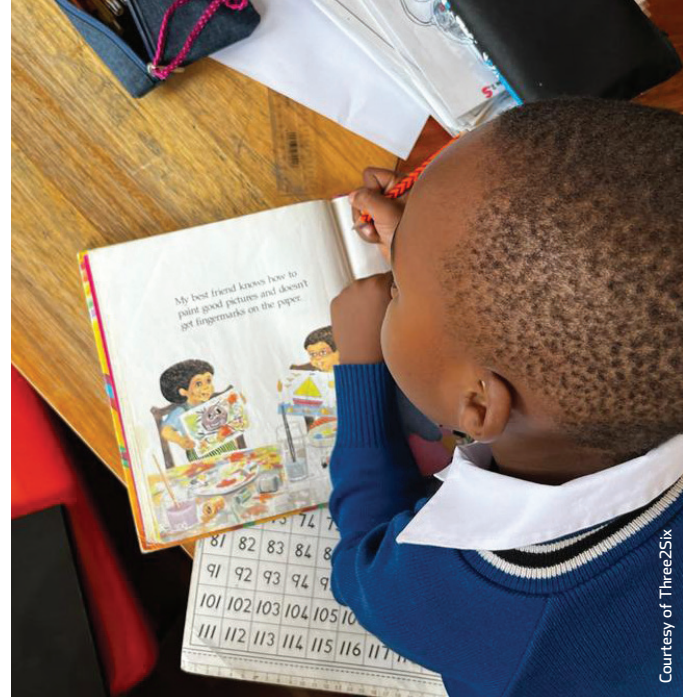
The project offers a basic education to undocumented migrant and refugee children, who come from all over Africa. Many of them are barred from South Africa's public schools because of their residency status. The children are given the opportunity to learn English, the language of instruction in South African schools.

The program can act as a bridge to mainstream education for the immigrant children who can get the paperwork they need to register in South Africa's public schools, and it offers financial aid to help with uniforms, stationery, meals, transportation and psycho-social support. Besides literacy, Three2Six's educators also focus on mathematics and life skills. But from the start, Three2Six has taken a holistic approach, looking after not only the education of the children but also their social and cultural development.

With the help of Three2Six, Debbie completed her primary and high school education and realized her dream of moving on to higher education. A university accepted her, but she needed the money to attend. She returned to Three2Six, where she was offered assistance to pay for tuition. "Three2Six is like a family; we felt loved," she says.

Peter, an 11-year-old from the Democratic Republic of Congo, explains that he could not speak English when he came to South Africa in 2018. "I was taught English and made friends from many different countries at Three2Six," he says. Five years later, Peter's hopes for his future have grown bigger. He dreams of becoming a pharmacist.

Many migrants and refugees in Africa see South Africa as a "promised land." They leave their own countries—often



Courtesy of Three2Six

troubled by conflict or socioeconomic breakdown—and move south, seeking a better life for themselves and their families. Sadly, they soon discover that South Africa can be a land of hardship. Migrants here are often denied access to basic services like health care and education, and they face sometimes-violent expressions of xenophobia.

Janet, born in South Africa to refugee parents, has been refused citizenship by the South African government. Stateless, she was denied entry into a public school. For two years, she stayed at home. "I watched other children go to school every day," she says. "I knew I couldn't go." Her mother learned of Three2Six by word of mouth, and last year Janet started school through the project. She hopes one day to become an accountant.

Three2Six grew steadily and eventually expanded to other schools, but this year, the Marist Schools Council bought a site and turned the after-school program into a full day program at the Dominican Convent School, where the children from the Three2Six project are integrated with South African children. Extra attention is paid to promoting social cohesion between the native South African and immigrant students.

Janet says that initially she was worried about the move from Sacred Heart into the new school environment at Dominican. "We were worried about discrimination from the South African kids," she says. But school administrators "mixed us up, and I got to know that [the South African students] are not discriminatory. We are all friends."

Russell Pollitt, S.J., *Johannesburg correspondent.*



In southern Lebanon, Christians are caught in the crossfire between Hezbollah and IDF

On hillsides in southern Lebanon, Hezbollah fighters have been launching rocket fire into Israel, inviting counter-strikes from Israel Defence Forces just a few miles away. The tit-for-tat conflict has been continuing since the terrorist attack by Hamas forces on southern Israel on Oct. 7. In the middle of the two warring parties along the Lebanon border are ancient communities of Maronite, Melkite and Orthodox Christians.

Many Christians here, remembering the catastrophe of the 2006 war between Hezbollah and Israel and expecting this conflict to get much worse, have abandoned these agricultural communities, leaving their homes and olive groves and finding refuge with family and friends far from the border. Virtually everyone from the Christian village of Alma al-Shaab, less than two miles away from Israel, has fled, but the Rev. Maroun Gaafari plans to remain.

“My role as the head of the village church [Mars Elias] is to stay as long as there are civilians here,” he said. During his survey of the village on Oct. 23, about 60 remained out of a Melkite and Maronite community of 800.

“We believe that we should not have to leave our homes,” Father Gaafari said. “This is a poor village. People here took years to build their houses, and in Lebanese culture, your house is a significant part of your identity, so we will not leave them.”

Christians in southern Lebanon feel caught in the crossfire. They are not against Hezbollah, but they do not

support its attacks on Israel. And Lebanese Christians feel for the Gazan people. “We have been occupied too,” said Miled Eid, a former mayor of Alma al-Shaab, referring to the Israeli occupation of parts of southern Lebanon from 1982 to 2000. “But this is not our war, and we do not want to be dragged into it.”

Another Christian village, Deir Mimas, is surrounded by green hills close to some of the most famous hiking trails in the country. The land around Deir Mimas has been frequently targeted by Israeli forces responding to Hezbollah rocket fire.

Haloun Hasbani owns a guest house here with her son. Explosions rocked the countryside around Deir Mimas just days before, “about 500 meters away from us,” Mrs. Hasbani said. “All the windows of the guest house shattered; we had to clean everything.” More violence, but not enough yet to push her out of her village.

“We know that for now we are safe inside the village, but we constantly hear planes, explosions and drones over our heads. It is unbearable.” If the fighting gets worse, Mrs. Hasbani said she will leave. “We have an apartment in the Beirut suburbs, but I am not worried about myself. What about those who do not have any place to go? What will they do?”

The Rev. Najib Amil is the pastor of St. Georges, a Maronite parish in the nearby village of Rmeich. “Before 2006, we were all doing great, we were working in our fields,”

The Rev. Najib Amil is the pastor of St. Georges, a Maronite parish in Rmeich.

Father Amil said. “In one minute, everything changed, and war started.”

“Now, I have no idea what things will be like in the future,” Father Amil said. The interview is interrupted by Hezbollah rocket launches, and a few moments later by return fire from the I.D.F. Explosions on the hills surrounding the town can be seen in the distance.

“There are explosions every night here, but Hezbollah does not launch anything from [inside] Rmeich. They simply pass through the town,” Father Amil said. “We have great relations with other religions here. I go to Muslim celebrations; they come to Christian celebrations.”

In Lebanon’s south, the idea of a better future increasingly appears a vain hope. “Most of our youth, once they finish high school, want to study either in Beirut or abroad,” Father Gaafari said.

Few of them imagine a life in these small Christian communities after they finish school. Between 2020 and 2023, over 200,000 Lebanese left the country.

Lebanon’s economy seems trapped in an endless state of crisis: The country is burdened with the care of many thousands of refugees, and a war between Hezbollah and Israel seems ready to ignite again. This latest conflict and increasing hopelessness leave the Christians who remain in southern Lebanon wondering if the Christian presence here may one day vanish forever.

“We wait,” Father Gaafari said, knowing “we can only rely on ourselves and on our community.”

Clotilde Bigot contributes from Beirut.



Women wait outside a PEPFAR-supported clinic at Our Lady of Apostles Hospital in Akwanga, Nigeria, in 2010.

U.S. bishops call for continued funding for global AIDS program

As the United States marked the 35th World AIDS Day on Dec. 1, domestic politics threatened the future of one of the nation’s most successful global health initiatives. The U.S. President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, or PEPFAR, a program launched in 2003 by President George W. Bush to combat the spread of H.I.V. in under-resourced nations, has been credited with saving more than 25 million lives.

The initiative has invested more than \$110 billion over the past 20 years in the fight against H.I.V., mostly in Africa, to help slow the spread of the virus, provide life-saving drugs to people living with it, and care for those whose lives have been upended by the crisis, including widows and orphaned children. The program provides funding to international nonprofits and local organizations to facilitate H.I.V. testing, public health campaigns and access to antiretroviral drugs.

While lawmakers in both parties have routinely voted to reauthorize the program, support seems to be eroding. Some Republicans have expressed concern in recent months that the funding Congress allocates for H.I.V. treatment is being used to offset spending on abortion by some nongovernmental organizations. Critics reject those charges and say that the lives of millions hang in the balance if the United States steps back from its role as a global leader in the fight against H.I.V.

Catholic Relief Services and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops support a five-year reauthorization of PEPFAR. But in a letter to lawmakers this summer, Catholic leaders also supported provisions to ensure that PEPFAR funds are not used to support organizations involved in abortion.

“The life-saving work of PEPFAR should never be entangled with the promotion of abortion, a grave evil and the opposite of lifesaving care,” they wrote.

Michael O’Loughlin, national correspondent.

Charting a New Path

Richer models of parenting can expand our imagination

By Holly Taylor Coolman

I remember clearly the precise moment I became a parent. In some ways, a familiar script unfolded. My husband and I rushed to the hospital. Friends and family waited anxiously for a phone call that would deliver the good news. And then, it happened. I was handed a gorgeous baby, rosy with dark hair. I had waited and hoped, and now here she was, a perfect little human being, entrusted to our care.


In other ways, I felt as if I were outside looking in, watching a scene I had never expected. Only a few moments earlier, I had held my daughter's birth mother's hand as this beautiful baby was born. This little girl was now nestled in my arms, but at that moment I suddenly felt flummoxed. "Well, hello there," I remember thinking. "You're the baby, and...I guess I'll be...the mom." It was enormous.

I am not the only one to experience the transition to parenting in this way. And if that first moment of parenthood does not create the sense of being in over one's head, it is all but guaranteed that some later moment will. To become a parent is to be entrusted with something infinitely precious: a human life. Parents take up a work of intense companionship and tender, relentless formation unlike any other.

Parents of faith often see their work as something more than chance or even choice—to see their lives with their children as a calling. But in order to understand how to live that calling, we also need to stop and ask the question: "What *is* parenting, exactly?" I do not mean that we should ask about the goal of parenting, although that is certainly connected. And







The process of parenting is something like sketching out a map as the child watches.



most parents do have some sense that their parenting efforts are directed to certain ends. They want to move children toward being functioning adults, or perhaps good citizens. Parents of faith may have an explicit goal of handing on that faith and fostering in their children a meaningful relationship with God or with the church. If they are thinking more specifically, parents may have other goals: to raise children to be happy, to be thoughtful, to be kind; to value education or family; and to live fruitful lives. Goals of these sorts matter, but they make sense only insofar as parents take the fundamental step of asking what the fundamental reality of parenting involves.

Three common models of parenting come immediately to mind: provision, instruction and discipline. All parents know that providing and caring for children is essential to their task. From the first baby blanket to a college education, parents must ask what their children need (and sometimes what they want) and then determine whether and how they can meet those needs. The model of instruction is central for most parents. Parents teach everything from how to hold a fork, to the habit of saying “thank you,” to ways to understand people and the larger world. Finally, even if it is not what they most look forward to, the majority of parents would name “discipline” as a central model for what they are doing as parents—and for some, this would top the list.

I would not suggest that we simply erase any of those ways of imagining what parenting involves, but I do want to offer other models that I believe to be richer ones. They

serve to expand our imagination about this work, and—perhaps unexpectedly—they also yield many practical kinds of encouragement and direction for parents.

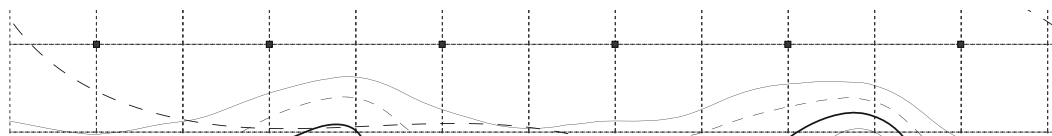
The Parents as Mapmaker

The first model is that of mapmaking. To see the model fully, imagine a parent seated at a desk, a large sheet of paper in front of them, and a child (or children) seated on their lap. The process of parenting, I am suggesting, is something like sketching out a map as the child watches. Explicitly—and even more powerfully, implicitly—a parent “tells” a child what the world is like. This includes, of course, forms of instruction. (“If you want to get to here, you’ll have to walk this way.”) It is a more multilayered and profound kind of instruction than a straightforward explanation of how to travel from A to B.

Mapmaking involves sketching out possibilities and edges. It means marking dangers. (“Here is a tall mountain range. And over there? Dragons.”) It means deciding which features and details are included. (The height of mountain ranges? The best spot to stop and see the view?) It will, of course, reflect the parent’s own knowledge and experience in many ways. Roads that she has traveled herself will be detailed and precise, and others may be indicated only vaguely. Or there may be places parents have never been, but where they very much want their children to go, and those will be drawn with vivid colors. The map may also be inaccurate—and parents do their children a favor if they remember that. For better or worse, a map does two things: It notes certain locations, and it has a center and an orientation around which these locations are placed. Parents cannot simply throw up their hands and say, “I have no idea.”

In particular, parents place an X on the map that marks a crucial spot for their children: “You are here.” Parents don’t simply sketch a world; they also tell children that they are part of this world, with varying relationships to various places. They indicate that some things are near and some things are far, as well as how the child might get from here to there.

For parents of faith, imagining a map also offers possibilities beyond simply speaking of a divine person called “God” or a reality called “church.” It means thinking about the center of the map and its fundamental orientation. To sketch faith for a child means drawing a map in which true north is a God who is good, a God who is love. It means suggesting both a spot on the map and also invaluable travel companions that together make “the church.” The “you” indicated on the map, moreover, has not been shipwrecked in that spot accidentally but is placed and is beloved, connected to God and to a company of saints. This map will





also include an awareness of sin; signs pointing out spots that are dangerous, or the traveler's own tendency to become disoriented. Faith may move parents to mark other spots in specific ways, but it is the central orientation that is most important, and upon which all else must be built.

Of course, this gives parents very interesting questions to ask of themselves: What is the map that I am drawing? What is the map that I have drawn so far? These are not easy questions to answer. So much of this is known deeply and intuitively, and parents may well not realize what they are communicating. Here, a secondary practice of mapmaking could come in handy: narration of, and conversation about, the contours of this particular map. In the model of mapmaking I am offering, a parent might speak as she sketches. ("Here is a small stream. It's bigger in summer and smaller in winter, although that's hard to see here. Here is a great city. Your grandfather and I visited there once.") And, just as important, a parent asks questions. ("Over here is a desert. Do you know what plants you would find there?") As a child grows, those questions will change, and a parent will not simply describe but will hear their child's impressions too. ("Have you gone this way? What did you find?")

Over time, a new phenomenon appears: Each child is building her own map (the map that she will pass on to her own children, perhaps). A child's map will always differ somewhat from the parent's, and it may differ greatly. Par-

ents are called both to offer their own map and to cheer on the child who begins to imagine her own. Even if adult children decide that this map they have been given is all wrong, they have at least seen a map made. They know to look for pathways and water sources. They know that maps are for sharing and using with others.

This model of mapmaking, it must be admitted, relies more on categories of picturing and discussing than on doing. For the latter category, I want to suggest another model of parenting, one that I understand to be even more comprehensive and important: We can think of parent and child as involved in a process of apprenticeship.

The Child as Apprentice

Apprenticeship, which still survives in some of the arts and some of the trades, was once a dominant form of education. The basic form is a simple one: An apprentice works alongside a master, watching carefully and slowly moving into greater and greater participation in the work. A masonry apprentice learns bricklaying by watching and then joining in the work of a master bricklayer. In the art studio, an apprentice might be allowed first to clean brushes, then to mix paint, then to begin adding details to paintings. Apprentices to the great artists of the Renaissance did these very things. Leonardo da Vinci, for example, became an apprentice at 14 as part of a chain of apprenticeship that was



Too often, parenting slides toward imagining something that parents are doing to their children.



eventually a chain of masters. He studied under a master named Andrea del Rocco, who himself had studied under Donatello. The apprentice eventually receives payment and produces her own masterpieces. The master, close at hand, oversees this process throughout.

Too often, parenting (and, in a sense, even the term “parenting” itself) slides toward imagining something that parents are doing to their children. Parents can get pulled into something perhaps better described as management of children. We get them ready for the day. We feed them; we bathe them; we pick them up and bandage wounds. And we try to follow all the advice. When they are newborns, we try to put them to sleep on their backs. When they attend school, we try to set up space for them to do their homework. We try to praise them more often than we criticize them. Ultimately, though—and sometimes it seems almost ceaselessly—parents are doing things to and for our children. This model has real weaknesses. It can create anxiety in children. It can erode the relationship between parent and child. And all this management, frankly, is exhausting—both for parents and for children. The model of apprenticeship, on the other hand, offers a number of fruitful emphases for parents.

The model of apprenticeship is more about parents simply being with their children, doing life together. If it becomes a guiding model, then it actually leads to less vigilance and less alarm. It involves less planning and less organizing. It involves more presence, more patience, more playfulness and more calm. The calling of a mother or a fa-

ther to walk with their children, sharing work, sharing play, sharing themselves, is a richer reality.

If I were to draw on lived experience, I would say that this picture of parenting actually looks something more like what we tend to associate with extended family members spending time with children. Picture an aunt or uncle who’s involved, who knows a child well and who spends time with the child regularly. A certain overarching dimension of simple companionship is evident. Grandparents, famously, are always more relaxed.

Parents are likely to immediately respond, “Of course grandparents are more relaxed! They don’t have the same responsibility for the outcome!” This kind of relaxed vision may seem unrealistic. But in my own parenting, I have found that it is more effective, and more practical, than we might imagine. It can include teaching, but it does not rest on constant, explicit instruction.

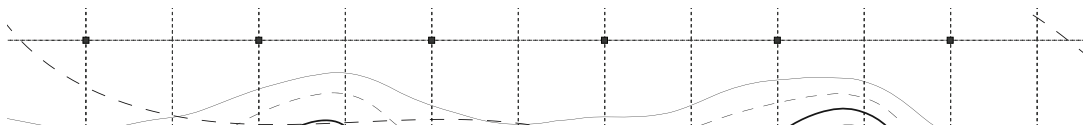
And interestingly enough, the focus of the master is not even on the apprentice in a direct way. Of course, the master will keep one eye toward the apprentice to see what it is that she does well, or even to offer a word of correction. There is a fundamental way, however, in which the two are faced toward the thing that they are doing—together. It may be a subtle difference, but there is something important in this model: The child is not a product but a beloved person.

Embracing Ongoing Learning

To fill out the picture of apprenticeship, there are at least two other essential elements of the model that I have in mind. First, I think of the way that many parents concern themselves with “getting it right” at every stage of their parenting journey. There is nothing wrong with a desire to do well, but in an age of social media and comparison, this can become suffocating. To talk of the work of apprenticing one’s children need not mean that one’s own mastery of everything is complete. In the apprenticeship of parenting, part of what a parent shares is her own ongoing learning process. Practically speaking, a child who sees her parent apologize, and even more, a child who sees her parent apologize to her, is being apprenticed in an important way.

Second, children are not apprenticed only to their parents. Children learn in a studio filled with artists; they learn in community. Parents can seek out communities who will contribute to their children’s apprenticeship, but they cannot conjure them from nothing. Ideally, parents are welcomed, along with their children, into communities that are already functioning in this way.

There may be programs or various forms of religious instruction in communities that can function as a form of apprenticeship, especially when we remember that the goal here is not simply conveying information. Initiatives like





clubs and camps and classes are most valuable when they set the stage for the real work of apprenticeship: the long, patient process by which more experienced people come alongside those less experienced and share with them the most valuable resource of all, which is themselves. They offer a context to do the work of the body of Christ—worshiping, serving, building, celebrating and mourning—together.

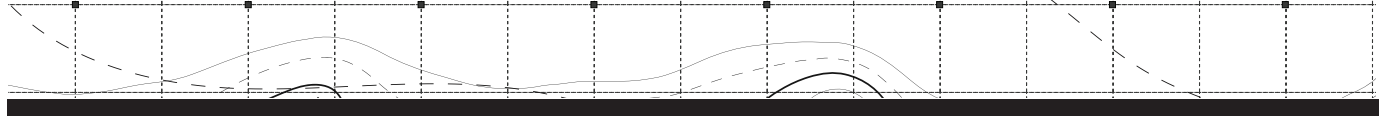
It's important to keep in mind a crucial challenge to apprenticeship parenting. In our post-industrialized world, we are often at odds with this model. In other settings, past and present, parents and children were and are literally able to work together because the work of the parents was not by definition separate from something that children were able to do. Probably the simplest and most obvious example here is a family farm. In that world, children as young as 5 are needed to work together with their parents. But we are in a different situation. What we call “work,” by which we usually mean paid work, now usually means traveling away from home and being gone, sometimes for 10 or 12 hours at a time. It is true that some parents are able to do the work at home, and that can provide some relief. But it can also highlight even more sharply the fact that adult work usually does not mix well with the care of children.

I do not want to simply romanticize the past. Living in the wake of some of these changes, though, parents can keep this challenge in mind. Parents can seek out stretches of time with their children in which they are not pursuing activities or entertainment, but are working together purposefully for some end. I have known parents, for example, who resisted buying or repairing a dishwasher for just this reason. The time spent washing and drying dishes is a perfect example of the sort of time in which the work of apprenticeship is given space to happen.

Christian parents may notice that this model of apprenticeship is a familiar one. Apprenticeship could be a way of thinking of discipleship. In Jesus, God became present for a process of apprenticeship, first with the Twelve, and then with ever-expanding circles of Christians. As Christian parents seek to imitate God, they can see their own commitment to the intensive process of apprenticeship parenting as a reflection of Jesus' own work among those he loved.

What Are Parents Modeling?

An important question remains to be asked: If parents are like masters and children are like apprentices, then what



is the skill that these apprentices are learning? It is not painting or stonework, of course. What is it that parents are modeling?

We could answer the question in a couple of ways. On the one hand, children are apprenticed to parents to learn a million things: how to talk, how to tie a shoe, how to drive a car. On the other hand, underneath all of those things, there are much more profound things being modeled and learned. Even in the case of experienced parents, there can be profound value in stepping back and reflecting on this question: What are the things at the center? What is it that we are teaching our children most fundamentally? Such an important question might even deserve very focused and intentional consideration in the form of a retreat or weekly time of reflection. For couples parenting together, it could be the basis of a rich, ongoing conversation.

As a way to begin that conversation, I suggest three possible answers that one might give about the fundamental character of parenting. These are hoped-for skills that have anchored parenting for me (even when I have fallen short in giving them the priority I intend!).

First is the most important of all—even if it is not the first topic addressed in typical parenting books: We are teaching our children joy. By “joy,” I do not particularly mean cheerfulness. I do not necessarily mean a “good mood,” and I certainly do not mean putting on blinders to avoid painful realities and negative emotions. What I mean is a deep conviction underlying all else—that the world is good and beautiful, and that one is welcomed into it. This includes a sense of wonder at this deeply good reality, and it inevitably results in gratitude, both for the smallest details and also for the remarkable gift that existence itself is.

Second is a sense of purpose. Here I mean seeing myself in the world as an agent, as someone who is interacting in it and with it in meaningful ways. We have already noted how helpful it can be to see this as a fundamental good being accomplished in toddlers, as they try to find ways to change their own situation—and the world around them. The same could be said for teenagers. It is easy to become focused only on setting limits, but parents can also look for ways to celebrate their children’s growing abilities with them.

Third, in this world of beauty—a world in which children are also able to accomplish things and bring about change—parents are apprenticing children to a sense of deep connection to others and to the obligation to respond to others with compassion. Parents give children a great gift when they embody the art of living in a web of community and connection.

Of course, for parents of faith there is a sense in which

the practice of that faith sits at the very center of it all. Ultimately, though, conscious faith rests on and incorporates all of these. Wonder at the beauty of the world proceeds as an awareness of God’s personal presence and produces trust, gratitude and a deep sense of being beloved. A sense of purpose becomes a vocation, a calling to live one’s own individual life to God’s glory. And a broad sense of connection to others finds a crucial center in connection with, and commitment to, the church—a connection that constantly spills over in the habit of loving others and inviting others to the table.

Here is the heart of parenting: to live life immersed in joy, purpose, compassion and faith—and to share that life with children.

This model of apprenticeship presents a profound challenge to parents: They must ask in what sense they are a “master” of these skills. Several decades ago a parenting book was published that emphasized how profoundly children can be influenced. The title of the book: *Children Are Wet Cement*. Some years later I heard another parenting expert refer to this book, saying that the title of the book is right, but perhaps not in the way parents expect. Children are deeply shaped by parents, but parents should not so much imagine that they are intentionally sculpting children into what they want them to be. Rather, children are wet cement whose parents fall face-first into them. Parents do leave an imprint, but it is an imprint of who they themselves are. This influence, this presence, is far more important than any strategies or tricks they could take up.

Holly Taylor Coolman is an assistant professor of theology at Providence College in Rhode Island. She is the author of *Parenting: The Complex and Beautiful Vocation of Raising Children*, from which this article is adapted. Copyright Holly Taylor Coolman, 2024. Used by permission of Baker Academic, a division of Baker Publishing Group.

FOLEY POETRY CONTEST

\$1,000 Prize

Now accepting submissions for *America's* 2024 Foley Poetry Contest. The winning poem plus three runners-up will be published in *America* magazine and on our website, americamedia.org.

► **ENTRY PERIOD**

Jan.1 through March 31, 2024
No entry fee

► **DEADLINE**

Entries must be postmarked or submitted on our website by midnight on March 31, 2024

► **GUIDELINES**

Submit only one unpublished poem on any topic

Poem should be 45 lines or fewer and not under consideration elsewhere

► **HOW TO ENTER**

Submit online at americamedia.submittable.com

Mail submissions to:

Foley Poetry Contest
America Magazine
1212 Sixth Avenue, 11th Fl.
New York, NY 10036

For more information contact
Br. Joe Hoover, S.J. at
jhoover@americamedia.org

America | MEDIA
A JESUIT MINISTRY



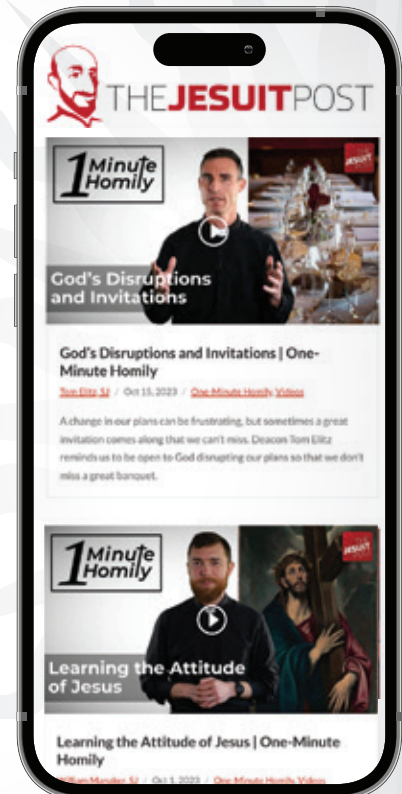
1 Minute Homily

Life is fast—our homilies are faster.

The Jesuits in training from The Jesuit Post can say a lot with a little. These 60-second reflections on the Sunday Mass readings are short on time but long on meaning. Follow TJP and get a one minute homily in your social media feeds and inbox every week.



To watch, visit thejesuitpost.org or scan this QR code.





SOUL SUPPORT

**How one nonprofit works to help clergy
abuse survivors on a path toward healing**

By Eve Tushnet




iStock

The word *awake* signifies a change, a new awareness of one's surroundings. Sara Larson's awakening came in 2018, following the Pennsylvania grand jury report on sexual abuse in the Catholic Church and the revelations of then-Cardinal Theodore McCarrick's long history of abuse. She says the news left her and other Catholics she knew in the Milwaukee area "concerned and hurt and frustrated, and wondering what we could do to help." In March 2019, a group of people began meeting in Ms. Larson's living room to discuss ways to respond. They called the group Awake, and it didn't take them long to settle on an answer.

That August, Awake made its first, formal, public act: an apology in the form of an open letter to survivors of abuse. Ms. Larson says that the group decided to issue the letter because "many apologies that have been given by church leaders feel inadequate." Awake, she says, "realize[d] that we as members of this church, as the body of Christ, could apologize as well, and make a public commitment to stand in solidarity with survivors and to work for transformation and healing in our church."

Four years later, Awake has grown into a nonprofit organization, and its response to the abuse crisis has grown, too. The group's mission is "to awaken our community to the full reality of sexual abuse in the Catholic Church, work for transformation, and foster healing for all who have been wounded." The group now does advocacy work and offers many programs that address the needs of abuse survivors. These programs include Survivor Circles, which are support groups led by both an Awake staff member and a volunteer who is a survivor, and Courageous Conversations on subjects ranging from abuse in marginalized communities within the church to raising children in a wounded church.

As part of its mission, Awake leaders have had multiple conversations with Hans Zollner, S.J., an expert on addressing and preventing abuse in the church and a former member of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors. In March 2023, he resigned from the commission, citing his concerns



There has to be a way for us to both love the church and speak about hard things.

about its “responsibility, compliance, accountability and transparency.”

Awake was born out of a conviction that survivors are members of the body of Christ: that Catholic prayer, the sacraments and all that the church can offer still belong to survivors, and that they deserve to experience the church in a way that restores, nourishes and heals. Awake also recognizes that, ultimately, survivors follow many paths of healing and discovery.

Awake welcomes members from a variety of faith backgrounds, and with various relationships to the Catholic Church. Some of Awake’s members have always been practicing Catholics. Others no longer have an interest in Catholic practices. But many have an ambivalent relationship to Catholic prayer, sacraments and worship settings. Awake strives to respect each of these perspectives because, for people against whom Catholic spiritual practices were weaponized for grooming and abuse, it can feel as though only a thin veil separates one’s present safety and healing from the trauma of the past.

Awake has taken on the complex task of modeling Catholic practices that are designed to be sensitive to survivors’ needs. These include an annual Way of the Cross for Survivors, in which reflections at each station are written by survivors and connect Jesus’ suffering to the suffering of survivors of abuse in the church. Awake also offers a novena prayer to the organization’s patron saints, which include St. Mary of Edessa, a survivor of rape by a Catholic monk. It also offers an in-person retreat.

Last year, Awake also started its first Survivor Circle that does not include prayer or any other religious element—a circle that “filled up immediately, because there were people who were longing for that,” Ms. Larson says. “Just because a person no longer identifies as Catholic does not mean that they don’t have a spiritual life or a connection with God. One of the things we offer to those who

are no longer Catholic is that we recognize the spiritual wounds of abuse by a religious leader and take that very seriously.” She says she has heard from many survivors that those spiritual wounds are “very real and very deep,” and adds that “the public conversation does not always pay attention to that aspect of the wounding.”

Wrestling With a Church That Has Caused Harm

Awake was founded by Catholics who had not experienced abuse in the church, but who wanted to bear greater witness and to take up greater responsibility for abuse survivors. That meant that Awake’s first year involved mostly what Ms. Larson described as “listening and learning.” Members listened to survivors with humility and with a commitment to honoring their experiences and better understanding their needs.

Ms. Larson says this process broke down her own naïvete, including a perspective she feels is common among Catholics, which she summed up as: “Sexual abuse in the church happened, it was really terrible, and it was a long time ago. In 2002 we found out about it and we fixed it, and now we don’t have to really think about it anymore.”

She adds, “I’d been a devout Catholic my whole life, I was working for the church, and I had never honestly faced this wound in the church.” So she spent the fall of 2018 doing research, listening to survivors’ stories and “deeply wrestling with what it means to love a church that has caused so much harm—and what my responsibility is as a member of that church.”

In 2020, as the group was beginning to host local events, the Covid-19 pandemic hit, forcing their events online. This meant that people across the country could easily connect with the group, which grew faster than they had thought possible. “What we had envisioned as a local organization became national very quickly,” Ms. Larson says.

The composition of Awake’s membership began to shift in ways that were entirely welcome: “More and more people who have the lived experience of abuse are connecting and investing in our programs, and stepping into leadership, which is really what we would hope for,” Ms. Larson says. The Survivor Circles “have become the heart of Awake’s ministry,” she adds, bringing people “from shame and isolation into community, where they feel welcomed and supported and understood.” She says that the wisdom gained from survivor-members—including those on the survivor advisory panel, 13 survivors who are consulted about the group’s decisions and direction—drives “all the other work we do.”

Ms. Larson remains a practicing Catholic and says that means being “both courageously honest and faithful.” She says that in the wake of the abuse crisis, “people often

Advocates of zero tolerance for clergy sexual abuse, including Peter Isely (right), Tim Law and Denise Buchanan, attend a march with abuse survivors in Rome on Sept. 27, 2023.



OSV News photo/Guglielmo Mangiapane, Reuters

feel like there are two options for Catholics: Either bury your head in the sand, pretend it's not an issue, or be so angry and have no hope for change that the only option is to distance yourself from the church."

She hopes that Awake can help Catholics find a more productive response: "There has to be a way for us to both love the church and challenge and speak about hard things." Awake works to achieve this through a holistic approach that involves four areas of work: education, advocacy, prayer and survivor support. "If you remove any of those pieces, then we're not fully addressing the issue in a way that's going to lead to transformation," she says.

Awake knows that many survivors no longer want a relationship with the Catholic Church. Ms. Larson notes that it can be difficult to navigate how to bring the Catholic faith into spaces filled with "people who have been deeply wounded by leaders of this church." Yet she has also found

that an invitation to some form of prayer can be a useful one in such spaces, and Awake tries to use prayer practices that "draw on the Catholic spiritual tradition but [are] designed to be really trauma-informed, to try to remove as many triggers as we can, and to speak to [survivors'] lived experiences."

She says many survivors have said that "it's really meaningful" to find a way that they can pray in a way that speaks to them, "but we also know there are people in our community that have no interest in connecting with any of those things, or would like to and just can't right now." Awake members are intentional about "not placing guilt or judgment or shame on those who cannot engage" with prayer for whatever reason. Ms. Larson says she often asks herself, "How do we both stay rooted in our Catholic faith and also create spaces [where] those who are not Catholic can feel included and welcomed?"



Awake leaders at the group's annual leadership gathering in May 2023

Courtesy of Sara Larson

Sacrifice Versus Being Sacrificed

Catholic beliefs have been deployed, both intentionally and accidentally, in ways that harm survivors. For example, the Catholic understanding that suffering can bring a believer closer to Christ can be used to minimize the anguish of abuse or dismiss the idea that trauma can damage souls.

Mike Koplinka-Loehr is a member of Awake's leadership team. He grew up as one of eight children and now has four children of his own. He has a deep interest in all the paths by which people connect with a higher power. When I asked him to give a capsule description of himself, he ended with, "He still has a relationship with God."


Mr. Koplinka-Loehr was groomed and then abused by a priest, beginning when he was a teenager. He responded to the pain and anger of ongoing abuse by shoplifting. Filled with anger and a desire to somehow "get back at" the priest who was abusing him, he would steal, sometimes in the priest's company, since walking into a store with a man of the cloth seemed to be the perfect cover. There's a desperate pain there: *Nobody would believe a kid with a priest would steal—just like nobody will believe that a priest could abuse.* Mr. Koplinka-Loehr tried to make amends in college, sending checks to the stores he could remember

stealing from, but he still carries the "volcano of anger" that fueled his actions—and he has only recently begun to discover, underneath the rage, "a deep well of grief." Many survivors of all kinds of abuse act out in similar ways: ways that can be hard to understand as expressions of suffering, especially if you have only been taught that suffering brings people closer to God.

Cathy Dante, Awake's chaplain, notes that survivors often blame themselves for their suffering. Ms. Dante says that Catholics may not realize the importance of the "difference between choosing to sacrifice versus being sacrificed."

One of the most devastating aspects of abuse by clergy is the confusion it causes about the nature of God. For many Catholics, it is comforting to hear that in the sacrament of confession, the priest acts not out of his own ideas or opinions but as an *alter Christus*, "another Christ." But how do you understand this doctrine if the confessional was used to groom, abuse or shame you?

Recently, I attended a church where the parish bulletin featured, among the parish school announcements and reminders of upcoming feast days, a quotation from St. John Vianney: "The priesthood is the love of the heart of Jesus. When you see a priest, think of our Lord Jesus



Survivors deserve to experience the church in a way that restores, nourishes and heals.

Christ.” Whether this quote strikes you as inspiring or cruelly false may depend on how priests have treated you.

Survivors of abuse by Catholic leaders do not fit any singular description. Some survivors may work to re-understand Catholic beliefs, including ones that have harmed them in the past: Esther Harber, a Catholic convert and Awake’s survivor care coordinator, says that at first she put bishops “on this pedestal that was not fair to them, certainly—but it was [also] not *true*.”

Ms. Harber notes that survivors often feel a deep ambivalence toward the church. She describes herself as remaining “a devoted Catholic,” and yet she has “seriously considered leaving the church.” Eventually, she says, she realized that “I’m just as much the church as the Holy Father. I am just as valuable and needed in the church as the Holy Father himself, and so is any other survivor—and in a profound way, even more so, because those are the people that Christ himself went seeking for.”

Many Paths to Healing

Awake is not the only group seeking to serve the spiritual needs of survivors. Deborah Rodriguez, a 57-year-old physician, pediatrician and member of Awake’s survivor advisory panel, says she is also “a survivor of reporting the abuse,” calling this reporting “the most traumatic” event of her adulthood, “because groups like Awake didn’t exist back then. Several of those I interviewed also said that facing suspicion or indifference when they reported the abuse, whether to family, police, or (perhaps especially) church authorities, was a more painful betrayal than the abuse itself. Many survivors also describe being treated as a “liability” by their dioceses when they report abuse.

Rodriguez also says that “a survivor’s cultural background is very important to the healing process,” and it is important for survivors to know there are multiple paths for seeking healing. “If a survivor reads [this] article and says, ‘It’s time for me to share’...and if you only have one or two places to call and you don’t resonate with either of them, it’s a really hard spot.”

Awake tries to inform survivors of those options and includes on their website a list of virtual support groups, as well as several other resources, including diocesan victim assistance coordinators, the Maria Goretti Network, and the Survivors’ Network of those Abused by Priests.

When I asked the Maria Goretti Network’s founder, Miguel Prats, about the most common false assumption non-survivor Catholics make about survivors, he gave a concise and plainspoken version of something I heard from several other survivors and advocates: “They think a lot of survivors come forward for money. That’s total bull—,” Mr. Prats said, with a rough laugh. “There’s a lot easier ways to make money than suing the Catholic Church.”

Like many other survivors, Mr. Prats says that other Catholics often seem “afraid” of survivors. Deborah Rodriguez offers one diagnosis: Catholic who have not been abused may view survivors as “in desperate need of help. And that leads to fear. They’re afraid we’re going to sue, or we’re going to have some kind of breakdown in Mass.” Ms. Rodriguez attributes these fears to people’s own unacknowledged trauma. She also notes, with a wry laugh, that Catholics may wonder, “It happened in the past, it must be over, aren’t you fixed yet?”

Those who find themselves witnessing, rather than ignoring, the pain of survivors can find that their own faith is shaken to the core. Sara Larson says, “I had no idea how much this would break my heart. How hard it would be to really see, firsthand, the depths of evil in a church that I love and have loved my whole life.” She says that, although she has long felt comfortable in the church, that feeling has changed since she founded Awake: “I have an experience now of never feeling quite at home. [When] I go to my beautiful parish for Sunday Mass, I’m carrying these experiences from so many people who have been so deeply hurt, and some of whom don’t feel welcome in those spaces.”

Ms. Larson says she has found that witnesses sometimes face the same suspicion as survivors: “Talking about these issues makes some people treat me as now an outsider or a threat, or [assume] that we are somehow against the church, when in reality we do this work out of love for the church and for all the members of the Body. I didn’t expect that, and of course [that] speaks to my naivete.”

Survivors and those who seek to support them may

Sara Larson and Mike Koplinka-Loehr
at the Awake Survivors' retreat in the
summer of 2023



find themselves asking whether it's good for their souls to keep returning to the place where they were harmed. Cathy Dante, Awake's chaplain, asks, "Are we codependent on the Catholic Church? I struggle with this: 'Jesus, why am I still Catholic?' I keep coming back to, 'It's where I'm called to be right now.'"

Those who do have faith often say it is a different kind of faith from what they had before they confronted the reality of abuse, in their own lives or in the church. When I asked Esther Harber to consider what she would say to a new convert, she offered a "three-pronged" counsel: "To love Christ above all things, including the hierarchy. This is his church first and foremost. To be faithful to the sacraments. And to love those most disenfranchised by the church."

She adds that working with other survivors has strengthened her faith. "Some of the most faithful people I have *ever* known have been survivors who somehow maintain a relationship with God in the face of [abuse and reporting the abuse]. I've heard it compared to the death of a soul, and I relate to that so deeply, and yet somehow in the midst of that they still find love for God, and it is astounding. It is something everyone in the church could learn from."

Ms. Larson says her experience with Awake has helped her to understand the true depth of an image that has always been important to her: "all of us as members of this body." She cites 1 Cor 12:26: "If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it." Ms. Larson says she has shared that

verse with many survivors, and while most resonate with it, "one person [said] that verse made her really angry," because she felt she had been suffering alone.

"That, I think, is a big part of the work of Awake: to call attention to the reality that one part of our body is suffering, and honestly much more than we realize," says Ms. Larson. "If parts of our body, the body of Christ, are suffering and we don't feel it, we don't hear it, it doesn't impact us, then it tells us something is wrong with the functioning of the body."

She says that, too often, even well-intentioned people approach victim-survivors with an attitude of: "Oh, we need to help these poor, sad, wounded people, who are very Other." But Ms. Larson is quick to correct that, saying that survivors "are amazing people: women and men of courage and resilience and wisdom, and often very deep faith. So many people in the church seem to see survivors as a threat in some way, and what I see is people who have such wisdom to offer that we're often not listening to. I wish people could see that if we made space in our church to welcome these voices, there's so much we could learn, not just about abuse but about faith and about courage, and about Jesus."

*Eve Tushnet is the author of several books, most recently **Tenderness: A Gay Christian's Guide to Unlearning Rejection and Experiencing God's Extravagant Love** (Ave Maria Press).*



1909 SOCIETY

DEFINE YOUR LEGACY WITH A PLANNED GIFT TO *AMERICA!*

Making a planned gift empowers *America* to continue telling the news and stories that matter most for your family. Join the 60 loyal supporters who have already included *America* in their estate planning.

There are more than half a dozen ways to make a planned gift to *America*. Some planned gifts provide you with income and tax benefits. Whatever gift you choose, your support continues both *America's* award winning coverage and your legacy.

To learn more about how you can transform your legacy at *America* with a planned gift, visit: americamagazine.org/plannedgiving or contact:

Heather Trotta
212-515-0118
htrotta@americamedia.org

It is important to consult with an attorney, accountant or tax advisor before making any major financial decisions.



WARS END IN DEFEAT FOR EVERYONE

A reflection on Gaza

By David Neuhaus

In the early morning of Saturday, Oct. 7, 2023, for Jews not only Sabbath but also Simchat Torah, a holy day celebrating the reading of the Torah, hundreds of armed Palestinian militants from Hamas broke through the barriers between the Gaza Strip and Israel or floated in hang gliders over them, pouring into Israel. They were accompanied by a barrage of missiles fired into Israel. The militants sowed terror and wreaked havoc, killing about 1,200 people, wounding thousands more and kidnapping over 240 Israeli soldiers and civilians.

The planning, implementation and ferocity of the attack took Israel by surprise—not only because Israeli intelligence had not uncovered the plot beforehand but also because the army took such a long time to neutralize the threat. Israelis were left shocked and horrified, while many

Palestinians watched with a certain sense of vindication, and some even rejoiced. Israel immediately responded with an intense bombardment of Gaza, calling up its military reserves and massing its troops on the border with Gaza. The pounding intensity of the Israeli response was not only a reaction to the horrors that had been committed but also an attempt to restore some sense of security in military superiority after the shameful negligence that had allowed the attacks to take place.

The next day, Sunday, Oct. 8, Pope Francis addressed the world in his Angelus address:

I am following apprehensively and sorrowfully what is happening in Israel, where violence has exploded yet more ferociously, causing hundreds of

A Palestinian woman mourns over the bodies of her relatives who were killed in Israeli airstrikes that hit a Greek Orthodox church in Gaza City on Oct. 20, 2023.

deaths and injured. I express my closeness to the families of the victims. I am praying for them and for all who are living hours of terror and anguish. May the attacks and weapons stop. Please! And may it be understood that terrorism and war do not lead to any resolutions, but only to the death and suffering of many innocent people. War is a defeat! Every war is a defeat. Let us pray that there be peace in Israel and in Palestine.

The Israeli Embassy to the Holy See reacted to this statement and those that followed with unease, claiming that the Holy Father and Cardinal Pietro Parolin, the Holy See's secretary of state, were using a discourse that manifested "linguistic ambiguities and terms that allude to a false symmetry." In insisting that Israel had a legitimate right to self-defense but should not indiscriminately bomb Gaza, the Holy See, the Israeli Embassy argued, was "suggesting parallelisms where they do not exist."

The issue raised is a serious one. What language should one use to talk about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict? This question is especially urgent at this time when the conflict takes on dimensions of violence that are unprecedented and emotions run high. How does one try to formulate a discourse that can encourage moderation, support dialogue and promote reconciliation even in the midst of battle? The issues involved are complex, but one must first recognize the morally problematic discourse that is being used by both sides in the conflict in order to dominate the narrative and garner uncritical support.

Whose Side Are You On?

The two sides to the decades-long conflict, Israelis and Palestinians, not only oppose each other with military arsenals but also attempt to mobilize public opinion at home and abroad in order to justify their actions. The military battle is parallel to the battle to control the images, sounds and words that are broadcast from the battlefield.

On the one hand, terrifying images of armed and masked Hamas militants pouring into Israel and wreaking destruction, killing, raping and maiming in an orgy of vengeance began to appear in the media. These images capture the massacres of the Israeli men, women and children who were mowed down in the area bordering the Gaza Strip, among them hundreds of young people killed while at a music festival and dozens slaughtered (including babies in their cribs) in the taking of the small village of Kfar Aza. The scenes show bodies strewn in public places

and in homes, with countless body bags displayed for all to see the enormity of the carnage. Photographs and short videos document the elderly women and young children taken hostage by Hamas and dragged into the Gaza Strip together with dozens of others, provoking profound terror and searing rage.

On the other hand, Israel's pummeling of the Gaza Strip with its sophisticated armory of precision weapons has provided a parallel and very different canon of images. Neighborhoods have been erased and high-rise buildings reduced to rubble in seconds, with thousands of Gazan men, women and children buried in the ruins. Hundreds of thousands of Gazans fleeing their homes provide more images of panic and desperation.

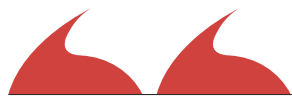
On Oct. 13, the Israeli army ordered Gazans to evacuate the entire northern part of the Gaza Strip. Images of the flow of people carrying a few precious belongings added to the collection of heart-rending scenes.

This roll of images showed the extraction of an unending stream of bodies of men, women and children from their bombed homes, the writhing agony of the wounded carried off to overcrowded, underdeveloped and grossly overloaded hospitals, and the nonstop shrieks of parents or children of the dead, and their relatives and friends, gathered around the corpses of their loved ones.

The selection of images is at the heart of the implacable demand from both sides for uncritical solidarity, for support of the right to self-defense and for the legitimation of the means used against the other. In this battle for public opinion, many stand with Israel and many others with the Palestinians.

In the aftermath of the initial Hamas attack, President Biden declared that his country's support for Israel was "rock-solid and unwavering." Leaders from major Western European countries followed suit. Israeli suffering was showcased to explain these unilateral manifestations of support. Israeli victims have names, faces, families and voices that cry out their pain in the media. Massive demonstrations have supported Israel, with participants screaming out their condemnation of Hamas and some using expressions redolent of racism, anti-Arab sentiment and Islamophobia.

Palestinian suffering, although seemingly passed over by those who support Israel, is showcased in Arab, Muslim and many other countries, again galvanizing the sense that the world is unjust, that the powerful side with the powerful and the poor continue to be mercilessly exploited. In their own massive demonstrations, supporters of the



How does one formulate a discourse that can support dialogue and promote reconciliation even in the midst of battle?

Palestinians have screamed out their condemnation of Israel, some using expressions redolent of antisemitism and manifesting a fury at what is termed the hypocrisy of mourning Jewish victims and ignoring Palestinian ones.

Who Started It?

Israelis and Palestinians produce very different narratives concerning who is to blame for what is happening. In times of war, it is comforting to know who are the good and who are the bad; that way, the aggressor and the aggrieved can be clearly separated from one another, one cheered on and the other excoriated.

On Oct. 7, Benjamin Netanyahu, prime minister of Israel, proclaimed: “We will take mighty vengeance,” as Israel launched its military campaign, named “Operation Swords of Iron.” For those supporting Israel, it is clear that the narrative begins on that black Saturday morning. Israeli President Isaac Herzog stated the following in his meeting with the press on Oct. 12: “There was no reason at all for this flaring up which ended in the worst tragedy that was ever inflicted in the history of Israel, and the highest number of Jews killed since the Holocaust, including Holocaust survivors.”

In the weeks and months leading up to the attack, Israelis had been focused on the dream that seemed within reach. Israel was about to sign a normalization agreement with Saudi Arabia, strongly supported by the Biden administration. This was a further step in a process of normalization agreements with different Arab countries that promised a new era of prosperity and economic cooperation. The Abraham Accords had pushed the Palestinian question out of the limelight. Now, suddenly, from the margins, a surge of violence shattered the calm, and Israelis found themselves facing an existential threat of new proportions.

The militants who streamed across the border took Israel by surprise; the threat from the Palestinians had

seemed a thing of the past. For the Israelis, it had been reduced to barely noticeable skirmishes, especially in the West Bank, where confrontations between Israelis and Palestinians would result in the deaths of a few Israeli soldiers and settlers and many more Palestinians, militants and civilians caught in the crossfire. The proportions of what happened on Oct. 7, however, not only raised a very acute question about the invincibility of Israel’s military and intelligence network but also raised the terrifying question about whether the state of Israel is after all a safe haven for Jews fleeing violence in a world in which they were a marginal and often persecuted minority.

Mohammed Deif, the commander of Hamas’s military wing, named this stage of the ongoing conflict “Al-Aqsa Storm” and declared: “Enough is enough!” Hamas declared that this incursion into Israel was itself a response to occupation and repression that have lasted for decades. More precisely, Palestinians pointed to increasing Israeli attacks and repressive policies directed against Palestinians throughout the territories Israel has occupied since the Netanyahu right-wing coalition came to power, as well as the intensifying activity of Jewish extremists in the area of Jerusalem’s Haram al-Sharif (what Jews often call the Temple Mount). For those supporting the Palestinians, the success of Hamas’s attack surprised them as much as it did Israel. Well planned, well executed and devastatingly successful in its initial aims, the attack is not seen as a beginning but as a response to a long series of Israeli acts of violence.

The attack is justified by Hamas supporters as a reaction to the regime that has kept them enclosed in an overpopulated strip of land, mostly filled with sprawling refugee camps; Israel, they argue, has kept the Gaza Strip under a stranglehold siege. Refugees constitute about 70 percent of the population in Gaza and include people driven out of the territories of the new state of Israel in 1948 and their descendants. The dire living conditions since then, worsened by periodic periods of confrontation with Israel since Hamas came to power in 2006, have left it battered and bruised, its population bleeding and its infrastructure regularly devastated. Furthermore, since 2006 the strip has been under a siege that deprives its residents of minimal conditions for life, prosperity and development. The newly instituted Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, whose diocese includes Gaza, said a few days before the present events that the Gaza Strip was “an open-air prison.”

The shocking question for the Israeli establishment that polices the prison from the outside is this: How did the Hamas militants get out? This question hovers over the



OSV News photo/Lisi Niesner, Reuters

Mourners attend the funeral for Israeli Col. Roy Joseph Levy at Mount Herzl Military Cemetery in Jerusalem on Oct. 15, 2023.

Israeli establishment and will certainly be taken up when this round of hostilities ends. However, another question must be asked as well: What motivated the Hamas militants? What can explain the almost unimaginable spree of slaughter that left hundreds dead on that black Saturday? Are the young men inhuman killing machines by birth, by genetic make-up, or because of their culture or religion? Or should their violent reaction be understood within the conditions in which they and their parents, grandparents and great-grandparents have been living as the world has looked the other way? Understanding context does not remove culpability for participating in horrendous acts of brutality, but it is the only way to stop a cycle of violence that has gone on for too long. Can these questions even be asked side by side without falling into the trap of legitimizing violence against either Israelis or Palestinians?

Demonizing the Other

The word *terrorist* plays an important role in each side's presentation of what is happening. A few days into the war, John Simpson of the BBC defended the decision of the BBC not to call Hamas terrorists. "The answer goes right back to the BBC's founding principles. Terrorism is a loaded word, which people use about an outfit they disapprove


of morally. It's simply not the BBC's job to tell people who to support and who to condemn—who are the good guys and who are the bad guys." The British defense secretary, Grant Shapps, said that this policy verged on the disgraceful.

This is one part of a battle to formulate discourse that can communicate the events in a war. The two sides are eager to show the other as demonic.

The Israeli Point of View

In the media battle, supporters of Israel portray Hamas as Nazis, as ISIS, as servants of the evil empire of Islamic Iran. The use of images of some Palestinians rejoicing in the horrors visited upon Israelis solidifies the sense of horror and the contempt. Supporters of Israel point out that the people of Gaza elected Hamas and so argue that they are responsible for their own misfortune. Pointing to the long history of antisemitism and contempt for Jews in so many parts of the world, supporters of Israel present Israelis as the victims of unprovoked violence at the hands of bloodthirsty Palestinian terrorists, in continuity with the suffering of the Jews throughout history.

The prominent Israeli journalist Alon Goldstein wrote: "As terrible as it is, it is also that simple; throughout each generation, there are those aiming to annihilate us because



The military battle is parallel to the battle to control the images, sounds and words that are broadcast from the battlefield.

we are Jews. Now we face despicable creatures, reincarnated Nazis.” He argued that this history justified Israel’s “strik[ing] the Arab enemy with a force that would bring it to its knees, hurt each and every family and rue the day that they ever crossed the Gaza border.”

Mr. Netanyahu, for his part, said that “ Hamas terrorists bound, burned and executed children. They are savages.... Hamas is ISIS.” Israel’s president, Mr. Herzog, said that the war against Hamas is in a direct line with the war against ISIS. These portrayals were echoed by President Biden in his remarks on Oct. 10 underlining that the United States stands with Israel. He referred to the Hamas attack as “pure unadulterated evil,” arguing that Hamas’s reason for being is “to kill Jews.”

In the light of the fight against evil, the divisions that marked Israeli society in the past months have evaporated. Furthermore, the marked reservations that the Biden administration expressed with regard to Mr. Netanyahu and his right-wing coalition have also vanished, as Mr. Biden not only regularly calls in to express his support for Israel but also sends a steady stream of officials to manifest that support concretely, bringing assurances of diplomatic, military and economic assistance.

The Palestinian Point of View

However, in the Arab and Muslim worlds and in many countries that have known colonialism, racism and exclusion, the Palestinians have succeeded in linking their struggle to a worldwide liberation struggle against colonialism, imperialism and white supremacy. Israelis are presented as colonial supremacists engaged in decades of ethnic cleansing of Palestinians from their homeland whose only interest is the oppression and eventual extinction of Palestinians. Hamas has explained that it does not target civilians but chillingly adds that the elderly, babies, children and youth are all part of the colonial Zionist proj-

ect to deprive Palestinians of their rights and banish them from the stage of history.

One of the outspoken supporters of the Palestinians, Gustavo Petro, the leftist president of Colombia, likened Israeli declarations on the war against Gaza and its military actions to Nazi practices on his Twitter account: “No democrat in the world can accept Gaza being turned into a concentration camp.” President Cyril Ramphosa of South Africa, wearing a Palestinian scarf in solidarity, declared that Israeli treatment of Palestinians smacked of apartheid, the evil regime that South Africans had fought against.

The portrayal of the other side as demonic justifies the means used to fight it. The enemy is dehumanized, commonly likened to savage animals that have lost any shadow of humanity, morality or logic, killing machines that can be stopped only by brutal and merciless war. Ultimately, there is little room for the recognition that there are civilians on the other side, innocent bystanders who are the first victims in this logic of total war—whether they are being targeted deliberately, as in the attacks on Oct. 7, or their deaths are being justified as collateral damage even when they vastly outnumber legitimate military targets. Whatever its logic, a rhetoric that minimizes concern for noncombatants strengthens fear, hatred and an inexhaustible desire for revenge.

Violence and Victory

Fed by what seems like an unquenchable thirst for revenge, both sides to the conflict propose that violence will bring victory. The belief that victory is attainable by defeating the enemy in pitiless warfare is at the heart of the rhetoric of war. This is perhaps the most venomous myth in any conflict.

This is not the first time that Israel has been taken by surprise. In 1973, a joint Egyptian and Syrian attack on Israel on Yom Kippur caught Israel off-guard. It took the Israelis a number of days to repulse the attacks. The war is celebrated as a victory by Egypt and Syria even though ultimately the Israeli military prevailed. Interestingly, within five years, Israel and Egypt had signed peace accords sponsored by the United States.

The latest Palestinian incursion into Israel took place almost 50 years to the day after the outbreak of the 1973 war. But the conflict between Israel and Egypt was between two neighbors sharing a common border; negotiations could settle border disputes. The current conflict is far more complex, as there are no clear borders between Israel and the Palestinians. The borders proposed by the U.N. Partition Plan in 1947, then by international law after

the armistice agreement in 1949, then by the failed negotiations imposed by the United States in the 1990s, have left Palestinians stateless. Furthermore, increasingly extremist Israeli governments have refused to recognize that the Palestinians have a right to a sovereign state with defined borders. Might the intensity of the present conflict and the terrible losses on both sides take us beyond the horizon of endless war with a growing recognition that victory is illusory and continued violence is ultimately suicidal?

The Word of the Church

The international community seems to have given up on trying to play a moderating role in the conflict, and those peace plans that were proposed by various international parties have gone nowhere. Since the breakdown in the U.S.-sponsored Israel-Palestine peace process initiated in the mid-1990s, there has been little prospect of a change in the situation on the ground. Mr. Netanyahu's latest ruling coalition includes in its ranks members who are implacable foes of any compromise with the Palestinians. In the Palestinian arena, the Palestinian Authority leadership has been challenged by Islamic movements that have expressed particularly vociferous opposition to compromise or dialogue with Israelis. Meanwhile, Israel continues to expand its presence in the territories meant to constitute a homeland for Palestinians, strangling hope of a new horizon.

In this context, the presence of the Catholic Church is particularly needed. Free of the constraints of political interests and avoiding as much as possible the games of international diplomacy, the church can be prophetic in reminding all that every human being—yes, even a Hamas militant or a Zionist settler—is created in the image and likeness of God. The church can remind humanity, and especially Israelis and Palestinians, that we are all called to a different path, one of justice, peace, equality and reconciliation rather than of war, violence, vengeance and hatred. The church can afford to be “naïve” and promote the belief that tomorrow can be different from today, that the mistakes of yesterday do not need to condition the fate of humanity.

The church has as its vocation the ministry of the word, the Word made flesh being at its center. The church is called to witness to a different reality than that of division and strife. The ministry of the word is one in which the words spoken by the church can unlock new horizons, creative possibilities and bear witness to them.

In a dramatic response to a question from a journalist, Cardinal Pizzaballa offered himself in exchange for the Israeli children held hostage by Hamas. In solidarity with the suffering, he would no doubt also offer himself in exchange

for the Palestinian children buried under the bombs dropped in Gaza. In a letter he addressed to the faithful on Oct. 24, Cardinal Pizzaballa expressed his anguish:

To have the courage of love and peace here, today, means not allowing hatred, revenge, anger and pain to occupy all the space of our hearts, of our speech, of our thinking. It means making a personal commitment to justice, being able to affirm and denounce the painful truth of injustice and evil that surrounds us, without letting it pollute our relationships. It means being committed, being convinced that it is still worthwhile to do all we can for peace, justice, equality and reconciliation. Our speech must not be about death and closed doors. On the contrary, our words must be creative, life-giving, they must give perspective and open horizons.

On Oct. 15, Pope Francis published an apostolic exhortation to mark the 150th anniversary of the birth of St. Thérèse of Lisieux. In his description of the life and theology of this beloved saint, much venerated throughout the Middle East, he wrote words that might be a fitting reflection for these dark days in Israel/Palestine:

It is trust that brings us to love and thus sets us free from fear. It is trust that helps us to stop looking to ourselves and enables us to put into God's hands what he alone can accomplish. Doing so provides us with an immense source of love and energy for seeking the good of our brothers and sisters.

David Neuhaus, S.J., is a priest who teaches Scripture in Israel and Palestine and is a member of the Holy Land Catholic Church's Justice and Peace Commission. Born in South Africa during the apartheid era, he has lived most of his life in Israel and is an Israeli citizen.

Searching for the Holy Dirt

‘Doing what you’re doing’ on the way to El Santuario

By Joe Hoover

In the morning, I left Merry Sunshine and traveled to El Santuario on the way to Christ in the Desert.

Later in my journey I hitchhiked to visit my brother and his family who lived on the old farm, Carl and Lorena’s, who were dead and gone though their wheat still grew. Later, my brother drove me to Oklahoma City to meet up with Bud, who fought to save the life of Timothy McVeigh, who had killed Bud’s daughter, Julie.

Julie with modified cat-eye glasses I knew from college; my brother from the lower bunk in a bedroom decorated with Indian warrior wallpaper; Carl and Lo-

rena because my dad grew up in their house being their child; Merry Sunshine from a tip by a woman at the Taos Hotel, flustered when I asked her for a place to stay that night. *Uh, no*, this woman had said. I was wearing a Yankees hat. Maybe that was the problem. *But I have heard of a woman named Merry Sunshine*, she said.

It was the spring of 2003, and I was 31 and traveling through New Mexico, a state I had never been to and longed to explore. A place that felt both sweet and...*raw*, is that the word? Laid bare for the sun to beat down on. I was excited to be there and nervous to be



El Santuario de Chimayo is a national historic landmark and Catholic church in New Mexico.

there. I had so little money!

So it was morning and I left Merry Sunshine, a woman who took in strangers and who took in me when I found her apartment with hazy directions from the hotel gatekeeper in the gathering night, and let me stay for three days, and who wore her name neither with irony nor twinkling self-awareness, but with sobriety, as if to say, *Of course I am called Merry Sunshine, look at what I do, what else should I be called?*

I left her and hitchhiked down Highway 68 in the foothills of the Sangre de Cristo mountains toward Christ in the Desert, a Benedictine monastery outside Abiquiu, N.M. There the monks made honey and, I supposed, mournfully chanted the hours away. Then someone I met along the way told me about a place called El Santuario in the town of Chimayo, a pilgrimage site in the same region. I decided to go there.

I had heard that this area was rife with heroin addiction and crime, that it was violent. As I left Merry's I pasted a holy card of Our Lady of Guadalupe onto my backpack. (It was a pack I had bought at a stoop sale in New York years before, not because it was lightweight or waterproof, which it was neither, but because it was canvas and was a shade of mint green like the way your Keds get when you mow the lawn. It was hard not to buy.) I hoped the sight of Our Lady would ward off anyone from attacking me. Or, even if young men did try to strike me down, their fists would suddenly be frozen, unable to lash out. *Do you not know, my Joselito, that I am protecting you, I who am your mother...*

So I hitchhiked and camped and no one jumped me and eventually I got a ride to a place called Española, about eight miles from Chimayo. From there I began to hitchhike to El Santuario. About a mile into the journey, with no one picking me up and seemingly no prospects thereof and the day getting toward evening and Chimayo still a few hours away, I was getting scared. (Do you think I like writing that here and now, that I was scared? No. No, I do not.)

I was scared because I heard from more than one person that someone, or maybe even a few people making the pilgrimage to El Santuario had been killed along the way. (I learned much later they were all talking about a single horrific incident from three years earlier.) So, should I keep going to Taos as the night fell and pilgrim killers were possibly on the loose? And where would I stay if I even got there? I had no plan, no prospects, there were no other pilgrims walking along the road with me. It was an unpleasant moment.

In the middle of my fearful questions and overarching, useless-mint-backpack, unhitched-hiker, pilgrimage sadness I suddenly remembered something a priest had told me only a few days before, had told me and nine other Jesuit novices in a wood-paneled, lodge-like room in a house in Minnesota. (This



is why I was out in New Mexico in the first place: I was a novice in the Society of Jesus and this was my current Jesuit novice mission: Wander.)

The priest, who was blind, for whatever it's worth, was giving a talk about Jesuit spirituality. A spirituality whose ultimate point was freedom. You ask God to detach you from all that you cling to—riches, honors, pride, any shade of any Camaro you think you need. Detach from all that is fleeting, so you can cling only to the one thing that is needful.

Progress in the spiritual life, for a novice, or for any Christian, writes St. Ignatius in the *Spiritual Exercises*, “will be in proportion to his surrender of self-love and of his own will and interests.” You pray for interior freedom so you can become obedient. Obedient to the requests of your superior, the one who “stands in the place of Christ.”

I had joined the Jesuits the year before, in 2002, leaving a life of acting, writing and teaching, because I was willing to take on this kind of obedience. “Go on the pilgrimage,” the superior says, and you go. “Teach high school English, teach *I Am the Cheese* and *The Witch of Blackbird Pond*”—and you do. Free yourself to be missioned this way or that with no preference but what God prefers.

Age quod agis. This is what the priest had told us. It was a line from St. Ignatius Loyola (who was himself probably quoting some old Roman legate's calisthenics diary).

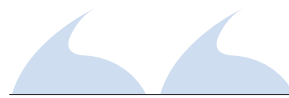
Candles and rosaries are among the offerings seen in El Santuario de Chimayo on Oct. 3, 2011.

Meaning: “Do what you are doing.” Do what you are doing and trust it is the will of God. Don't second-guess yourself. Don't overthink it. Just be present to the task at hand. All you can do is what you can do and then the Holy Spirit has to take over.

As soon as I remembered *age quod agis*, I don't know if I immediately gained more courage, or if my mind was simply too busy translating Latin into English to be fearful anymore—but nevertheless, I decided to do what I was doing. I kept walking. About a minute later a car slowed down. It was a station wagon and it pulled over to the side of the road, and I hustled over and told the driver where I was going. He said he could take me there. It had worked.

Richard was a practitioner of herbal medicine who lived in the area and told me he had felt the need to go to El Santuario that day. I was pleased—he was not Catholic but was visiting our side anyway. We drove to El Santuario, which it turns out was actually a complex of chapels, courtyards and gardens. We stepped inside the primary destination of most pilgrims, the chapel of Our Lord of Esquipulas.

Some places you go into and it feels.... I don't know how to say this with much eloquence, but it just feels very, very cool. There is a weight to the place. The air is thick, you can



All you can do is what you can do and then the Holy Spirit has to take over.

feel it, it is humid with the holy; a weight and a gloom but the best kind of gloom, found primarily in old and darkened Catholic churches. I sat there with great relief. I had made it. I had passed the novice test, succeeded on the first stages of pilgrimage—taken in by Merry Sunshine and given a ride to Chimayo.

It was late afternoon and the shadows were lengthening. The adobe chapel was (as I recall) filled with crucifixes and Stations of the Cross and red-and-brown placards of beleaguered saints. It felt 10,000 years old. I could have sat there for hours.

There was a little room off to the side of the altar called *el pocito*, “the little well,” and in that room there was a hole with dirt in it, a fine, powdery dirt. I was told this was the thing, this was what people came for, the dirt.

One night in 1810, it is reported, a religious brother from the area named Don Bernardo Abeyta of the Penitente Brothers saw a light shining from a hill. He ventured out to see where it was coming from and ended up finding a crucifix in that small pit. Long story short, the dirt in that hole was considered holy and Don Bernardo built a chapel on the site, and for years since, droves of pilgrims have gone there every day, all year long. As many as 300,000 a year. It is one of the most visited pilgrimage sites in America.

On the wall off to the side of *el pocito* were crutches and braces. The dirt is said to have healing properties. Having rubbed this dirt on themselves, people had evidently cast off their walking aids and went off free.

I grabbed a couple of handfuls. It felt good to pick up this powdery, clean (if that makes sense) dirt. I put it in a plastic bag and put it in the mint green pack and still have it 20 years later. I recently gave a portion of the soil to a friend who seemed like he could use some.

After all this, the dirt and the crutches and the weight of the air and the splendid gloom of the chapel, Richard told me he would put me up that night. My relief deepened. We drove to his place where he and his wife made me dinner, and I got to take a shower and sleep in a bed. In the morning they drove me down the road a bit further along toward Christ in the Desert than I had been before. It was all awesome.

This, it would seem, is the crux, the point of this narrative: *Age quod agis*. Do what you are doing and eventually you will come to the holy dirt. You will get taken home by kindly strangers and fed and sent warmly on your way. Trust what the blind priest told you—of course trust a blind priest!—and simply keep on going, through your fear, to the holy place.

And for that matter, *age quod agis* like others in that region of the country whose lives have stayed imprinted on mine and who became an unexpected part of my pilgrim-

age. Like Carl and Lorena whose legacy of raising cattle and plowing fields for 60 years from the Great Depression onward still lives in me somehow. Like Bud Welch, whose daughter was blown up by a bomb in a Ryder Truck in Oklahoma City and who, after months of living in fury, had a conversion and eventually advocated to get Timothy McVeigh off death row. Like a priest I stayed with in Springer, N.M., who found time to shout the gospel of peace and nonviolence at soldiers in his town and who also made me a really great sandwich.

Age quod agis. A fine crux.

But I realized only recently that there is a second crux to this narrative. Or maybe it is a rider attached to the initial crux. After 20 years as a Jesuit, I’ve discovered that you can *age quod agis* all you want and you will not necessarily get the coin of the realm. You will not necessarily pass the novice test. The blind priest well could have been advising us: Do what you are doing, and get it wrong. *Age quod agis* your way through Jesuit life, and you may become a poor discerner, a failed weathervane of God’s will, a disobedient Jesuit, a magnificently deficient human being—all of which I have been more often than I care to remember. But do it anyway. The Father will still bring the increase.

Take a bus from St. Paul to Taos and search all over the place and never find Merry Sunshine and trust it will all be okay regardless. Hitchhike to El Santuario, and if any number of herbal physicians pass you by and you find yourself stuck on the side of the road, think to yourself, *Ahhh, so El Santuario has moved here!* and kneel down and scoop up the dirt right where you are.

Joe Hoover, S.J., is a Jesuit brother and America’s poetry editor.

THE HOLINESS OF ASKING FOR HELP

There is value in making our pain and need known to others.

By Cynthia-Marie Marmo O'Brien

The texter was suicidal, thinking about taking the pills or using the gun. It was my role on the text hotline to get them from this crisis state to a place of cool calm. It would be easy to panic in this situation, but my training as a crisis counselor and the support of a mental health professional just a few keystrokes away helped me keep my composure. It was more than that, though, that led me to take a deep breath and try to establish a rapport with the texter, to inquire more about why they were in this situation and to help keep them safe that day.

That volunteer experience of mine took place several years ago, but it has stuck with me.

I was raised to believe that everyone is loved equally by God and thus equally valuable as a human being. In my role as a volunteer crisis counselor, nearly everyone I encountered had lost sight of their own value. I know the feeling. I, too, have been uncertain of the value of my life. More than a decade ago, I asked my father to help me kill myself. I wrote goodbye notes specifying who should be at my funeral and put my head under the water in the bathtub.

Once my father found one such note in my desk. When he asked me if I planned to need it in the future, I hesitated. "No," he said vehemently. The note, so painstakingly written, was ripped up for the trash. In the depths of my depression, I often felt like that note: My life, so painstakingly crafted, felt torn up and discarded by someone I loved or by society at large.

In those moments, I held on to the notion that I was created by God for a purpose I couldn't understand. That sense of mystery was crucial to keeping me going, pushing



forward, raising my head above the water, helping me to hold on to some scrap of my value, even if I couldn't feel it. If I had relied on what I thought I knew in these moments, I would be dead. But I always held onto life, to the rational and seemingly irrational thought that God must have a plan, even if all my own plans seemed utterly destroyed and impossible. That is what God is for, making the impossible possible, raising from the dead, forgiving all sins.

When I was a crisis counselor, I tried to convey some sense of this hope, to infuse those seeking help with the notion they are valuable. As Catholics, we sometimes talk about being the face of God to other people or about encountering God in others. Indeed, God's presence is in everyone. So each time I sat down on the sofa for the two-hour shifts I served with the hotline, I not only brought all of my crisis skills to bear but also called upon a seeing God, asking God to help me to see the holiness in everyone I spoke with, no matter how distressed or in despair. And I tried to offer acceptance, unconditionally, no matter what had led to their crisis, just as I know God would.

But over time I came to realize how difficult it was for me to offer this same loving perspective to my own life. I was at times ashamed of my depression, of mania, of mental illness, of so many things that had shaped me but also had ripped the fabric I had so carefully sewn into a life. I once thought that my main challenge was that I didn't share these struggles with others, but I now see that this hesitance



iStock

was just a symptom of my inability to accept these struggles as my own, as part of my fabric. I wanted a chance to work with new fabric, not to repair the fabric that had gone with me on so many journeys. But in doing so I failed to realize the ways in which these experiences also made all the rest of my fabric more vivid, more beautiful, more unique.

I have learned to be O.K. with the tears and the repairs. Years later, I have grown in my ability to see everything that has happened as part of a path taking me somewhere unknown to me but that God has designed for me. It is this same belief that kept me alive in the darkest times, but now it survives in the middling times when I want to give up trying to change, trying to evolve, trying to thrive.

What drew me to volunteering for the crisis line in the first place was the hope that my pain might be of some use, might enable me to connect with those who were hurting. I noticed that when I told others that I served on the crisis hotline, people seem to admire one half of the relationship: the counselors. Rarely did they express admiration for those in crisis who are brave enough to seek out help and share their own pain, for those who reach out for a lifeline when they could drown themselves.

Why do we admire the lifeline rather than the ones who seek it, the ones who save themselves, the ones who recognize, even if at the last second, their own value? As Catholics, we are encouraged to seek God when we are lost, and, in a way, those texting the mental health hotline could

be seen as doing something similar. They are seeking something bigger than themselves, a perspective beyond their intense moment of panic or despair.

In my most desperate moments, I, too, became a texter, asking not to be alone. Which version of me is more loved by the Lord? The one receiving the texts or the one sending them? The answer is neither. The Gospel of John says: “This is my commandment. Love one another just as I have loved you” (Jn 15:12). Through loving those on the crisis hotline, I planted the seeds that helped me to eventually love myself.

Galatians 6:2 reminds us to “carry each other’s burdens and so you will fulfill the law of Christ.” Yet there is much to be valued in making it possible for someone else to carry our burdens, by making our pain and need known to others. By letting others in, we enable them to do the work of God. We can enact the holiness of asking for help. Through being the face of God to others, perhaps we can finally accept that God’s love is for us, too. Perhaps we can then put down the burden of our shame, taking away its power, replacing it with a sense of faith and the knowledge of our power as part of a community in individuals, all of us loved wholly by God.

Cynthia-Marie Marmo O’Brien is a writer and educator in New York.

Television 1950-2000, R.I.P.

By Robert David Sullivan

On Jan. 10, 1999, “The Sopranos” premiered on HBO. It was an exhilarating hour of television, and I could hardly stand waiting an entire week for the next smart, daring, commercial-free episode.

Well, it would be *almost* a week. I had videotaped the first episode and watched it a few hours after it aired—mostly out of obligation, since I was writing about TV for an alternative weekly newspaper and thought there was a chance “The Sopranos” would be up to the standards of “ER” or “Homicide: Life on the Street.” I was so pleasantly surprised by the quality of the show that I didn’t realize I was watching something that would help kill off shows like “ER” and “Homicide: Life on the Street.” I didn’t realize that “The Sopranos” would, in fact, help end television as a public space and as a vital part of a social democracy.

If “The Sopranos” premiered today, I would probably wait for a long weekend and watch the whole season over a few days. In 1999, I spent a week thinking uneasily about the fifth episode (“College”), in which we see Tony Soprano actually kill someone, and realized that I could not simply enjoy James Gandolfini’s performance as an update of comic TV characters like Ralph Kramden and Archie Bunker. Today, the episode would barely faze me before the next episode would start playing automatically.

Another difference was that in 1999, I was telling everyone I knew about “The Sopranos,” which became the talk of the television industry within a few weeks. Today, it might take me months to realize it even existed, and I would mention it only to the few friends who might “get it”—sparing the ones who have said they don’t like violent shows, or shows in which no one is likable, or shows where the protagonist is a middle-aged white guy. I would figure that any show that good is not meant for everyone. After all, watching TV is not like participating in a democracy, right? You don’t have to accept what other Americans like.

The trouble with that attitude is that democracy cannot work without respectful public debate, and public debate has become more and more poisonous as Americans limit themselves to contact with like-minded people—not only in how they get their news but also in how they choose the entertainment that inevitably shapes how they view the world.



Television as a popular medium died
25 years ago. It's time to mourn.

iStock



The self-segregation of elitist viewers has worsened the fragmentation of what was once a national culture.

Newton Minow, then the chair of the Federal Communications Commission, described the power of television in his caustic “vast wasteland” speech, given to the National Association of Broadcasters in 1961: “It used to be said that there were three great influences on a child: home, school and church. Today, there is a fourth great influence, and you ladies and gentlemen in this room control it.” Minow was speaking when the “big three” television networks (ABC, CBS and NBC) together attracted about 90 percent of the audience on a typical night, and his fear was that the networks would limit their offerings to popular action and comedy programs with little social relevance. “If parents, teachers and ministers conducted their responsibilities” in the same way, he said, “children would have a steady diet of ice cream, school holidays and no Sunday school.”

Things were not as dire as Minow suggested: By the early '70s, audiences were embracing programs with more substance than “Gilligan’s Island,” and by the '90s, prime-time storytelling routinely addressed political topics from health care to the death penalty. Then came “The Sopranos” and the rise of HBO: the most expensive ice cream in your grocer’s freezer.

The HBO Bubble

“It’s not TV, it’s HBO” was the subscription-only cable channel’s slogan beginning in 1996, the same year that Fox News launched. Both cable channels offered their own kinds of bubbles, or alternatives to sometimes-abrupt tone shifts of broadcast television in its first half-century. If you stuck to your favorite cable channels, you no longer had to sit through the boring parts of “The Ed Sullivan Show,”

which could go from ballet to the Beatles, or spend an evening going from “America’s Funniest Home Videos” to the pilot episode of “Twin Peaks” (which both got huge audiences for ABC one spring night in 1990).

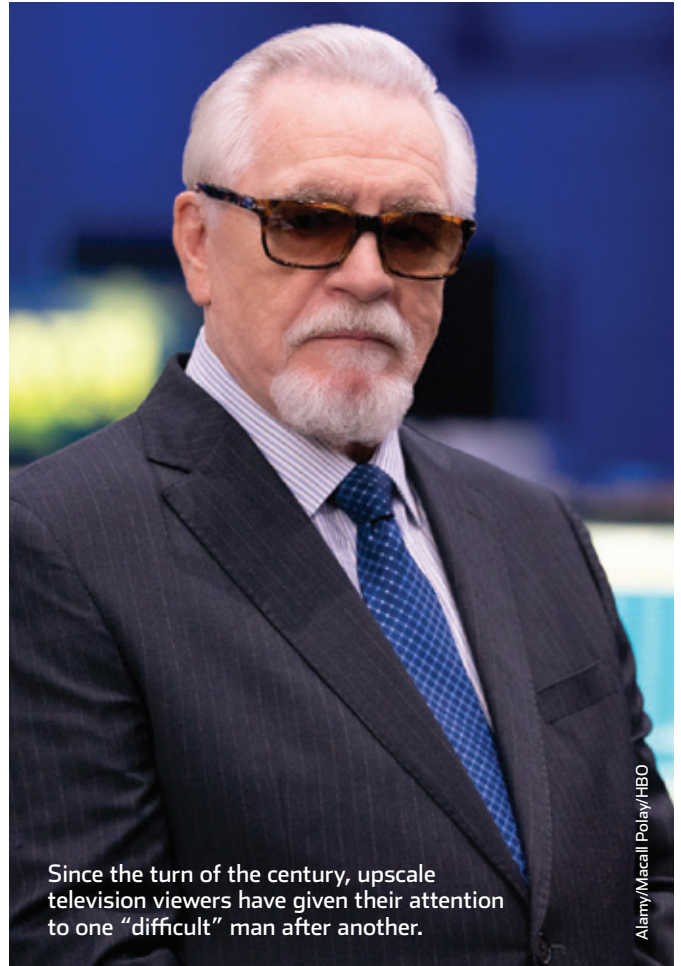
With shows like the extremely violent prison drama “Oz” and the carefully modulated “Sex and the City” (low-key funny, but never sitcom funny), HBO was a haven from the hoi polloi. Despite the urban settings of many of its shows, HBO was like a suburb that had seceded from a noisy metropolis and no longer had to provide services to poor neighborhoods (i.e., less sophisticated viewers). “The Sopranos” and its progeny became known as “prestige” television, a term that evokes Ivy League schools and four-star restaurants.

The first couple of decades of prestige television—when it began choking the life out of intelligent broadcast television—was dominated by series with anti-heroes, or *Difficult Men*, to use the title of an influential book by Brett Martin about television’s “creative revolution.” These series, about narcissistic and even psychotic men ruining the lives of everyone around them, included not only “The Sopranos” but also “Breaking Bad,” “The Shield,” “Dexter,” “House of Cards” and “Ozark.” (There was also the less violent and more hopeful “Mad Men,” as well as a few “difficult women” series like “Damages.”)

Seventy-five years ago, “prestige” television might have meant a Leonard Bernstein concert in prime time, a live production of a play by Eugene O’Neill, an erudite quiz show like “What’s My Line?,” or Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen’s weekly program that aired against the frenetic comedy of Milton Berle. Since “The Sopranos,” the term is more likely to refer to a series about a killer who evades justice over and over again, or a terrible-people melodrama like “Succession” that grinds on for years with a small but devoted audience.

This is fine with most TV critics: David Bianculli, a longtime contributor to NPR, rebutted the idea that television’s “golden age” was in the 1950s in his book *The Platinum Age of Television: From I Love Lucy to The Walking Dead, How TV Became Terrific*, in which he wrote, “The Platinum Age of Television as I define it, therefore, is the period from 1999 to 2016 and beyond.” In other words, TV only became worthwhile when it abandoned the idea of shared cultural experiences and instead began catering to obsessive fan bases of shows like “The Walking Dead” and “The Bachelor.”

This idea is reflected by the Emmys. During the 20th century, the television awards went to the best shows that were popular; now they go to shows that are popular among the best-educated. “Veep” and “30 Rock” are no better, and



Since the turn of the century, upscale television viewers have given their attention to one “difficult” man after another.

Alamy/Macall Polay/HBO

certainly no less repetitive, than “All in the Family” and “Everybody Loves Raymond,” but they have a more sophisticated sheen. “Succession” is no better than “ER” or “Gunsmoke,” but its insularity and in-jokes better fit the *prestige* label.

Bianculli is not wrong to argue that television has matured since “The Sopranos,” and his analyses of how different TV genres have evolved over the past few decades is fascinating. (I certainly wouldn’t trade HBO’s “Deadwood” for a Top 10 western like “Bonanza.”) But many critics who have celebrated shows on premium channels and streaming services seem to have missed that commercial television—ironically, the closest the medium has to a public space—has become much worse. There has been a cost associated with “peak TV,” as the self-segregation of elitist viewers has worsened the fragmentation of what was once a national culture.

The Ups and Downs of Broadcast TV

It would have astonished Americans who watched, say, coverage of the moon landing in 1969 to learn that tuning into the big three broadcast TV networks would cease to

become a habit in most households in just a few decades, or that lists of the most-watched telecasts of all time in 2024 would not include anything from the 21st century other than Super Bowl games. Almost as astonishing has been the near extinction of so many prime-time genres that once seemed invincible, including variety shows, made-for-TV movies and even the mighty sitcom.

The fickleness of TV audiences partly explains why broadcast networks cycled through so many trends, but economic considerations were at least as important. In researching historical TV ratings, I was surprised to discover that critically acclaimed dramatic anthologies in the ’50s, like “Playhouse 90” and “The Twilight Zone,” got pretty healthy audiences. But they were relatively expensive to produce, their audiences fluctuated from week to week (depending on the story and the guest performers), and they didn’t do so well in reruns. So the broadcast networks went overboard on westerns, with 28 of them in prime time in the fall of 1959; the more westerns, the cheaper they were to produce, since they could share sets and costumes. This budgetary reasoning was also behind the proliferation of newsmagazines in prime time in the 1990s and reality



Seventy-five years ago, ‘prestige’ television might have meant a Leonard Bernstein concert, or a play by Eugene O’Neill, in prime time.

shows in the 2000s.

Despite the mercenary instincts of the broadcast networks, some laudable programming made it to the air and attracted huge audiences. In the ’70s and ’80s, in addition to socially conscious sitcoms like “All in the Family,” there were popular, made-for-TV movies that sparked national political discussions (including “The Day After,” the 1983 movie about the effects of nuclear war that attracted 100 million viewers, and 1985’s “An Early Frost,” about the AIDS epidemic); historical miniseries (like “Roots” and “Eleanor and Franklin”); and religious epics like 1977’s “Jesus of Nazareth.” In 1980, the prime-time soap “Dallas” may have been the most popular show, but the top-rated program one week in September was the made-for-TV film “Playing for Time,” written by Arthur Miller and based on a memoir of surviving the Auschwitz concentration camp during the Holocaust. “Playing for Time” was seen in about 20 million homes on one night, which was more than 20 times the immediate audience for the series finale of “Succession” 43 years later.

Special-event programming began to fade in the 1990s, but at the same time the bar was raised for weekly dramas. With its fast pace and multiple storylines, “ER” was the most demanding program ever to rank No. 1 for an entire television season. “The West Wing” broke the rule that political dramas never attracted big audiences, and “The X-Files” enjoyed the ratings success that had eluded “The Twilight Zone” and “Star Trek.” There were also ambitious series that didn’t make it past one year but showed that commercial television was evolving beyond the usual crime dramas and prime-time soap operas (like “Twin Peaks”;

“Nothing Sacred,” about an urban Catholic parish; and the high-school comedy-drama “Freaks and Geeks”). But the success of “The Sopranos,” by showing an alternative to the broadcast networks, stopped this evolution in its tracks. With upscale viewers fleeing to HBO and other pay channels, the big three networks returned to crime, scheduling endless reiterations of “NCIS,” “CSI,” and “Law & Order.”

Granted, even the best of the popular TV shows during the “big three” era could be called middlebrow rather than high culture, and the historical dramas were not always strictly accurate (neither is Shakespeare), but the same can be said about the “golden age” of Hollywood. Almost all of the films from Hollywood’s first half-century that are now considered worthy of academic study (from “The Wizard of Oz” and “Casablanca” to “Vertigo” and “Some Like It Hot”) were made for mass audiences, often shown with cartoons and Three Stooges shorts. You did not need to join subscription-only cinemas to see them.

“The Sopranos,” which was more popular than just about anything HBO has produced since (except for “Game of Thrones”), will probably be considered a TV classic for decades to come. But most of the premium cable shows of the past two decades, with their niche audiences, are likely to be seen as dated and pretentious a few years from now. And they will seem *slow*. Last summer, Roz Chast, a cartoonist for The New Yorker, captured the spirit of prestige TV with “Humpty Dumpty: The Ten-Part Series” (“Episode 3: Humpty is born; the wall is built”), showing how a four-line nursery rhyme might be turned into an origin story that could keep viewers glued to Netflix for a weekend.

The Diversity Challenge

One thing about television that has improved, especially over the past 10 years, is the representation of women and of racial and sexual minorities. The original “Twilight Zone,” which ran on CBS from 1959 through 1964, may come the closest to my ideal television series in its willingness to take risks and surprise viewers. But the producers almost always cast middle-aged white men as the protagonists in the anthology series, even as the stories often explored universal themes like the dehumanization of modern society and the fear of mortality. The lack of diversity on the screen is surely one reason the big three networks lost their grip on TV audiences. Even before HBO stepped up its original content, Fox and other new broadcast networks challenged the big three in the 1990s in part by scheduling more shows with nonwhite leads (including the sketch comedy “In Living Color” and the sitcom “Living Single”).

Today’s streaming services and premium cable networks do much better with representation. For example,

the science-fiction anthology “Black Mirror” has been notable for exploring “Twilight Zone”-like themes with more diverse casts. Recent non-broadcast series have depicted life for Latinos in Los Angeles (“Gentefied”), Indigenous Americans (“Reservation Dogs”), Orthodox Jews (“Shtisel”), and Arab Americans (“Ramy”), and other shows have shown the religious beliefs of main characters (like the Catholic family on “The Bear”) in a way that the big three networks once shied away from.

But most of these programs don’t make it much beyond their target audiences and will never achieve the broad appeal of ’70s programs about Black history, like “Roots” or the TV-movie “The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman,” or the reach of dramas with diverse casts like “ER” (or even current broadcast series like “Abbott Elementary”). The streaming-TV model simply doesn’t encourage people to watch shows about people of different backgrounds.

In New York City, where I live, one currently popular show is “Only Murders in the Building,” which depicts apartment life in New York City, while viewers in the American Heartland are tuning into the modern western “Yellowstone.” For just about anyone, there are now more shows on television that reflect your own life; the trade-off may be that there is nothing that reflects our common life, or addresses our common concerns.

Entertainment and culture, like politics, has become as balkanized as supermarkets with dozens of brands of bottled water.

The Lost Opportunity of Public Television

The idea that American television can be both popular and worthwhile may have been irreparably damaged by public broadcasting. The creation of public broadcasting in the United States in 1967 shifted fine arts programming like opera, ballet and classical theater to an underfunded, little-promoted network. The commercial networks, which had far more resources to produce and advertise what it once called “spectaculars,” used this as an excuse to largely abandon the fine arts and, then, any kind of common culture at a higher plane than “Dancing With the Stars.” It is difficult to remember, now, that in the ’50s and ’60s, commercial TV could attract big audiences with productions of theater classics like “Our Town,” “Blithe Spirit,” and “The Caine Mutiny Court-Martial,” and could create modern classics like “A Charlie Brown Christmas.”

Cable television once held the promise of taking up this mantle. When there are dozens, even hundreds of channels instead of three bean-counting networks, the thinking went, there will surely be room for serious art, and

for programs that appeal to us as human beings instead of consumers. Newton Minow thought as much; in his “vast wasteland” speech, he was optimistic about getting “more channels on the air” and said “television should thrive on this competition.”

But today, public television is still almost alone in airing fine arts, as subscription channels and streaming outlets concentrate on moody dramas that are often high-gloss versions of the same crime stories seen on commercial television. Even worse, all those channels have made it increasingly rare for television to fulfill its promise as a civic tool or public space. Americans still watch the Super Bowl, the Olympics and presidential debates together, but that’s about it.

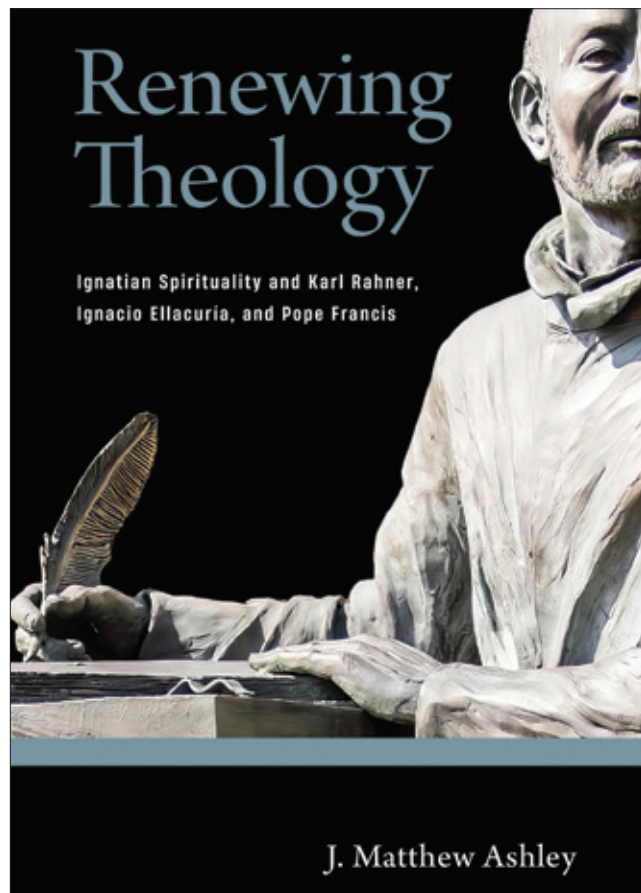
The political columnist A. B. Stoddard recently wrote about the 40th anniversary of “The Day After,” which had been championed by her father, then the president of ABC’s movie division. “My father...worked in an age of television that doesn’t exist anymore,” she wrote, “one in which TV could still unite the culture, and sometimes even enlighten it. That era feels terribly remote.”

At the beginning of 1999, it was still possible for television to be a uniting and an enlightening force, but instead it broke apart. HBO went one way in January with “The Sopranos,” and broadcast TV took another route that summer with a new fast-and-cheap hit: the game show “Who Wants to Be a Millionaire.”

At that point, what Tony Soprano himself said about the American dream could have applied to American television: “I’m getting the feeling that I came in at the end. The best is over.”

Robert David Sullivan is the production editor of *America*.

A RELEVANT SPIRITUALITY



University of Notre Dame Press / 432p \$80

What does the word *theologian* call to mind? A devout monk, prostrate on his cell floor, praying? A faithful soup kitchen volunteer? Or a self-serious, tweed-wearing type, swapping fancy metaphysical terms with other bookish people? I'll wager it is the last.

My seminary professors' favorite refrain was some version of "Theological study needs to be paired with worship and prayer—it needs to actually shape your life." That this important instruction needed constant reaffirmation illustrates a fact of modernity: Theology and spirituality—two sides of what was once the same coin—are now so often treated as different currencies. One has become an academic discipline and the other a bag of tools for managing life's difficulties. How did we arrive at such a thing as theology without spirituality? And how do we get back to a conception and practice of theology that is necessarily, and not just optionally or ideally, devout?

In *Renewing Theology*, J. Matthew Ashley notes that along with this increasing division between academic theology and spirituality, there is a general feeling among Christians today that theology has little to do with their

lives. Yet he argues that when brought into dynamic relation with spirituality (and vice versa), the work of theology is deeply relevant to our lives and is vital at every level of following Christ. It becomes part and parcel of a "way of life"—the life of faith.

This integration is mutually beneficial: Academic theology *sans* spirituality becomes little more than "technical jargon reserved for specialists" (borrowing the French philosopher Pierre Hadot's description of philosophy), and spirituality *sans* theology risks "provincialism, vague romanticism, or fanaticism." To demonstrate this relationship and the life it produces, Ashley turns to Ignatian spirituality and its exemplification in the lives and theology of three 20th-century Jesuits: Karl Rahner, Ignacio Ellacuría and Pope Francis.

Discovering in rigorous detail how the thought and work of each Jesuit takes as its guide St. Ignatius Loyola's Spiritual Exercises, the reader begins to sense the scope of renewal that Ashley is advocating. When joined to the deep well of spirituality, theology is not mere jargon; it is an experience of God and a force for good, capable of mobilizing individual persons and entire societies. This relationship between spirituality and theology is "deeply productive," not only for each other, but also, as Ashley illustrates throughout *Renewing Theology*, "for the Church and its environing society."

Ashley makes Ignatius the book's point of departure and conceptual anchor not because he thinks his is the only spirituality that is able to do (or that has done) this work of theological renewal, but because of his "particular aptness" for the problem at hand. Namely, Ignatius lived during modernity's genesis and was thus forced to contend with many of the same conditions that theologians wrestle with today—the conditions which, Ashley further argues, led to this rift between theology and spirituality. He summarizes them as modern individualism, the affirmation of everyday life and life's accelerating transience.

These conditions of modernity also gave rise to the very notion of spirituality as we know it, Ashley explains. The first condition, individualism, can be seen in contemporary spirituality's obsession with putting the individual in touch with their ever-elusive "true self." The second, the affirmation of everyday life, is evident in what the theologian and historian Bernard McGinn calls "the democratization of Christian mysticism," present today in notions like "the spirituality of sexuality" or even "the spirituality of shopping." And third, just like modernity's transience, contemporary spirituality places a high premium on portability, rendering us "like turtles," Ashley says, with "our havens on our backs."

Ashley maintains that while Ignatian spirituality reflects these conditions of modernity, it is not restricted by them. Though Ignatius directs his Spiritual Exercises at the individual, for instance, he always locates them within the broader context of the church and salvific history. Moreover, Ignatius' theological anthropology does not amount to what Charles Taylor describes as the modern, "buffered self" but is instead a firmly premodern "porous self." Ignatian indifference is not a mode of escape but an avenue to imitate and embrace the reality of Jesus more fully. Further, his affirmation of the everyday does not lower the vision of spirituality but raises the bar for all, regardless of profession or vocation. Finally, the rootlessness of Ignatian spirituality is "consciously chosen," leading not to fragmentation but mobilization, one present to secular time and salvific history simultaneously.

The result is not the disorienting frenzy of modernity but a sense of belonging effected by the unifying love of God. Ashley summarizes the modern self as one at work: *Laboro ergo sum*. Ignatius reorients the Christian to the work of God, in which the alienation of individual labor that Marx so poignantly describes is redeemed in the unifying labor of God. This unifying labor invites participation from all, the kind typified in the work of Rahner, Ellacuría and Francis. Rather than mere "havens" of fragmented spirituality, Ignatius offers these Jesuit theologians a "well of vision"—which is essential, because as Ashley notes, "Theology fails when its vision fails."

Each figure emphasizes different aspects of the Spiritual Exercises in accordance with their unique contexts and concerns. Of chief interest to Rahner, for example, was the Taylorian "buffered self" and the disengaged world of modern secularity. For that reason, he emphasized the mystical in Ignatius, convinced that Christians could survive in the modern world only by attending to the mysterious presence of God within it, by becoming themselves mystics.

Ellacuría turned to the Exercises with less of a focus on liberating the secularized individual and more on how this mystical encounter might transform the way we view and participate in history. To him, the Exercises are instructive in developing the proper affective response to one's present historical moment—all by way of cultivating those affections proper to the historical significance of Jesus. This "orthopathy" (right feeling), he believed, "lies at the root of the healing of the Christian social imagination and of discerning in which historical action we will, actually, encounter God."

Finally, Ignatius' influence on Pope Francis is evident in his emphasis on the pastoral. Francis stresses the impor-

tance in the Exercises of encountering Jesus and experiencing his mercy, of receiving his consolation and becoming capable of offering it to others, as he calls the church to do through his example. Thus, Francis finds in Ignatius the church's mission and identity as lying in its movement beyond itself to the peripheries of society.

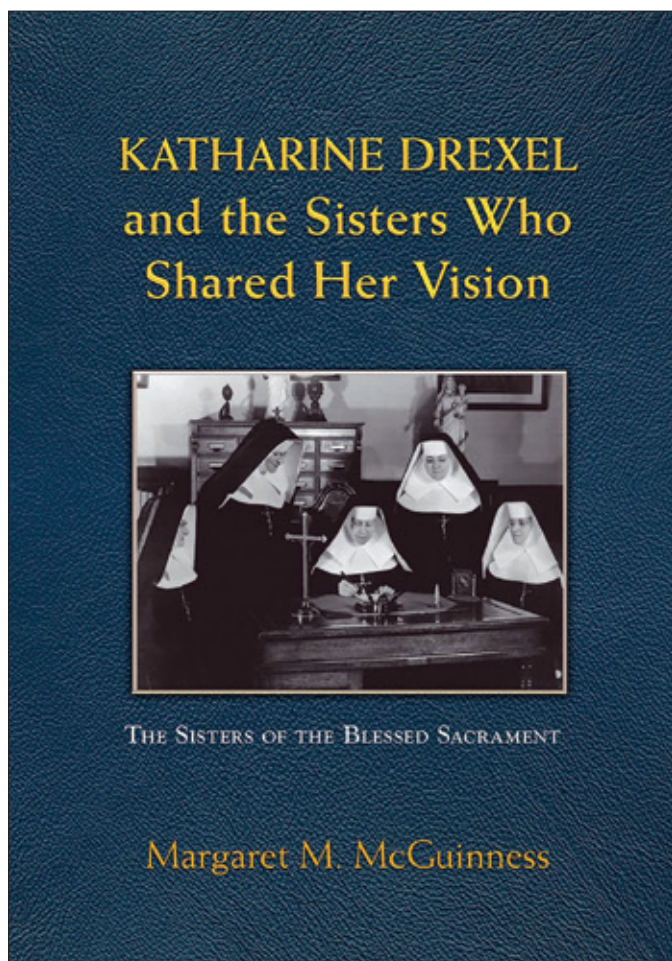
I could not do justice to these case studies in three brief paragraphs. Ashley achieves an impressively thorough portrayal of the lives and thought of each. He surveys their intellectual and spiritual formation, how they engage particular themes in the Exercises and, further, how they draw on these to conceptualize and respond to the conditions of modernity that were of special concern to them. Readers of varying degrees of familiarity with these three figures will all walk away, I am sure, with a fresh appreciation for their thought and work.

A major accomplishment of *Renewing Theology* is that it charts a way forward for a theological renewal that reflects and even welcomes the pluralism of modernity. Rahner, Ellacuría and Francis by no means agree on every point, something Ashley acknowledges. But one of the underlying theses of Ashley's text is that theological differences are more effectively addressed when rightly situated within a robust spiritual tradition because spiritualities are capable of crossing cultural boundaries with greater ease than doctrinal issues or theological systems. They "travel easier," and so engaging theological differences through a spiritual tradition allows for "theological dialogue that goes beyond polemical rejection or laissez-faire relativism."

While this division between theology and spirituality that Ashley calls attention to is not itself new, the way he delineates its origins and then traces a response—from Ignatius to Francis—takes a fresh approach. To revivify theology's relationship with a way of living in the world, Ashley does not merely demonstrate its possibility abstractly; he shows us. He shows us not just that renewing theology is needed, but imagines what it might look like, allowing readers to begin imagining how a renewal of this kind could take shape in their own theological tradition, within their own context, within their own lives. The "creative alternative" this volume offers is not a silver bullet, but a "well of vision."

Noah R. Karger is a doctoral student in theology at the University of Notre Dame.

RACE AND CATHOLIC MINISTRY



Paulist Press / 280p \$34.95

When receiving this book, this reviewer wondered: Why do we need another biography of St. Katharine Drexel? With at least six published volumes on her life, like Lou Baldwin's *Saint Katharine Drexel* (2000), numerous articles on the sisterhood she founded, and even dissertations on the works of her congregation, it would appear that the ground has been well traversed. What more could we learn from yet another study of the long-lived foundress of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament for Indians and Colored People—now known as Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament?

But the historian Margaret McGuinness has performed another valuable service to American Catholic history through her latest book, *Katherine Drexel and the Sisters Who Shared Her Vision*. In the aftermath of the murder of George Floyd, she and other scholars have begun a timely re-examination of Catholic social and institutional customs involving people of color. Focusing on this complex issue, McGuinness examines one of the most prominent religious orders that served American Blacks

and Indigenous peoples. In clear prose and with abundant research, McGuinness reveals how Drexel and her congregation both reflected and challenged American Catholic attitudes toward people of color.

McGuinness integrates a summary of Drexel's life story with a topical treatment of the ministry of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament. Writing neither a full biography of Drexel nor a complete history of the order, McGuinness examines the racial encounters of both within the context of their times.

In 1885, Katharine Drexel (1858-1955) and her two sisters inherited a vast fortune upon the death of their father. Reared in a life of privilege allowing them to engage in Catholic philanthropy, Katharine went further and founded a religious order in 1891 to serve the most neglected in her church, African Americans and Indigenous peoples. Through a lifetime of travels in the South, the West and the Southwest of the United States, she witnessed the educational and spiritual neglect of these fellow Catholics.

As “the richest nun in America,” Drexel headed the congregation she founded and also served as a virtual one-woman philanthropic foundation. She directed millions of dollars from her inheritance to construct and staff numerous schools and churches. She also founded Xavier University in New Orleans, the only Catholic institution in the nation dedicated to providing higher education for African Americans. Her sisters served in these institutions and shared her vision of Catholic ministry to those who suffered from segregation and the denial of civil rights. Here is where McGuinness raises a troubling question: Did Drexel and the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament enable racial segregation by following the policies of Southern bishops who did not integrate Black and white students in Catholic schools?

To begin answering her question, McGuinness titles one subsection “Drexel and Race—It's Complicated.” Significantly, McGuinness notes that there are few instances where the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament protested Jim Crow laws in the first half of the 20th century. To do so as white women in the American South, however, would have imperiled their schools and convents. Later, during the civil rights movement, the order was not noted for its participation in that struggle. Most telling, like other women's religious orders of the times, Drexel's order did not admit women of color to the community for its first 60 years of existence.

McGuinness cites the rationale of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament as documented in the order's own records. If the sisters accepted women of color into the order, the racist attitudes among the public would make it diffi-



Drexel and the sisters who shared her vision took the first steps of a journey that we must continue.

cult for the order to raise funds for its works. Further, such racial attitudes would discourage vocations to the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament because white sisters would object to living in community with sisters who were Black or Native women. Finally, accepting women of color would siphon off vocations from historically Black women's congregations, such as the Oblate Sisters of Providence and the Sisters of the Holy Family.

McGuinness adds that Drexel and her community chose to work with racial minorities but not to openly challenge the circumstances of the people they served. Rather, Drexel adhered to the gradualist position that John LaFarge, S.J., would later urge in matters of racial justice.

As a topical study, McGuinness addresses the issue of race in several sections of her book. She takes a geographic approach, focussing in specific chapters on the sisters' schools in Philadelphia, the American West, the rural South and the urban North, as well as Xavier University in New Orleans. Several themes reappear across these chapters, including Drexel's vision, generosity and oversight of finances; the previously mentioned reluctance of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament to admit women of color to their congregation; and the opportunities that the congregation missed to share leadership and decision making with the people they served. There are also examples of the local hierarchy interfering with the work of the sisters.

McGuinness closes her volume with suggestions for further research. Given that the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament are much reduced in membership, the future of their legacy is in question, such as at Xavier University. Further, rising concern about the deleterious effects on Native children at residential boarding schools already has scholars and others examining the schools run by Drexel's congregation, like St. Catherine's in New Mexico, St. Michael's in Arizona and St. Paul's (now the Martyr Indian School) in South Dakota. McGuinness wonders: "What did

the SBS know—if they did—and when did they know it?" Such matters have gained attention amid the wider clerical sexual abuse scandals in the American Catholic Church.

While Catholic clergy and the church hierarchy are the subjects of lawsuits, the investigations have opened the wider topic of sexual abuse of children and vulnerable adults. McGuinness does not suspect the S.B.S. of harming their charges. Citing the congregation's archives, to which she was given access, she found no documents related either to accusations of abuse or to lawsuits from the victims. She does caution, however, that historians who examine the wider issue will continue to look at the roles of women religious in the schools and parishes where abuse allegedly occurred.

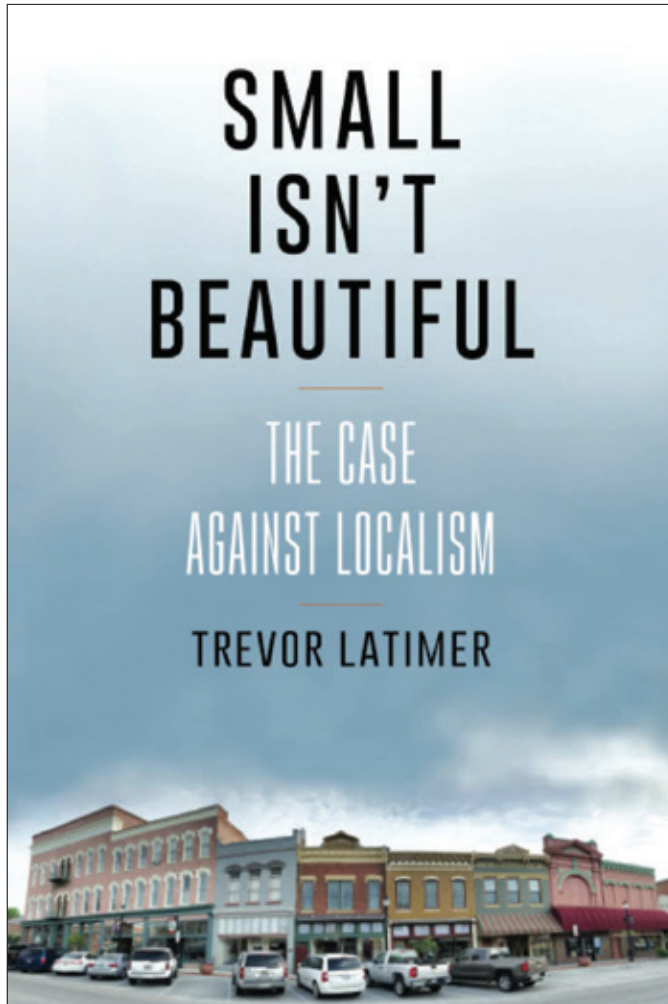
Should the book be reprinted (and it deserves to be), a future edition would benefit from several additions. Greater attention to the context of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament in the discussions of clerical sex abuse and the treatment of residential school children would strengthen the conclusion. Beyond the inclusion of their names, biographical material is needed to bring alive important sisters in the history of the congregation. Finally, an enhanced index that includes an entry for Katharine Drexel would benefit readers seeking access to her as an individual.

McGuinness deserves praise for this study of one sisterhood in the complicated history of race and the American Catholic Church. She documents how Katharine Drexel and the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament made valiant efforts to combat racism—and did so as women of their times who did not challenge the social hierarchy or protest publically policies they opposed. They may not have imagined integrating their convents, consulting those to whom they ministered or forming coalitions with Black and Indigenous peoples. Such work, however, remains for contemporary Catholics, lay and religious, to embrace and champion.

As we do so, we have the legacy of Drexel and the sisters who shared her vision and took the first steps of a journey that we must continue.

Michael Engh, S.J., is the chancellor of Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles.

WHEN BIGGER IS BETTER



Brookings Institution Press / 288p \$30

Buy local! Shop small! We tend to assume that these are good things to do, and even people with opposing political commitments find common ground in something called “localism.” But what is localism, and why do we assume it is good?

In his new book, *Small Isn't Beautiful: The Case Against Localism*, Trevor Latimer defines localism as “prioritizing the local by making decisions, exercising authority or implementing policy locally or more locally.” Latimer evaluates a number of arguments in favor of localism and finds all of them wanting. Ultimately, he writes, “I am not arguing that localism has drawbacks, that it has failed to work in particular cases, or that it is inappropriate for certain issues. I am arguing that its drawbacks are endemic, it fails to work in most cases, and it is inappropriate most of the time.”

The book is dense with arguments, analysis and examples from a range of disciplines. Latimer’s “on the one

hand...but on the other hand” style of argumentation helps put his thesis into action: While there can be certain goods that derive from localism and localist policies, many other goods are sacrificed at the same time. Choosing a policy that gives or takes away power or agency on a local level requires a cost-benefit analysis regarding what goods will be gained or sacrificed in the process.

In general, Latimer is persuasive in demonstrating that localist policies often do not achieve what their proponents intend. A chapter about the “argument from democracy” is a good example. Latimer evaluates the localist claim that smaller governments are necessarily more democratic. It is true that “the larger the community, the less influence each citizen has over its decisions. The smaller the community, the more influential each citizen becomes.” He acknowledges that an individual citizen’s efficacy might matter “if democracy is about each citizen getting her own way as often as possible.” But, he asks, is that what democracy is about? An individual citizen’s efficacy might also matter if citizens then feel more interested in politics, become better informed and make good decisions. Democracy is sometimes less about good outcomes and more about the process itself.

On top of this, “small communities promote citizen effectiveness while reducing system capacity. Smaller communities have fewer resources; they govern fewer people and less territory.” Thus, “Projects that would have been possible in larger communities are constantly thwarted.” In other words, under localism, people might have lots of control over many small things but have little ability to influence bigger issues—say, global warming. Ultimately, “the one benefit available exclusively at the local level, direct experience, must be weighed against the benefits at higher levels.”

I consider myself to have some localist sympathies. Latimer has convinced me that I need to work harder to define and defend exactly what those sympathies are, and I am grateful that he has provided tools for thinking them through. Thanks to Latimer, I realize now that I have uncritically bought into the “argument from tyranny”—that centralization of power is “bad, evil, despotic, foolish” and that political power locally distributed is the opposite of those things. That may seem intuitively true; it certainly did to people like Montesquieu and de Tocqueville. But concentration and centralization of power are not the same, and there are tradeoffs to diffusing power too much. I am more convinced than I have ever been of the necessity for decision-making on a large scale to deal with large problems.

But the result of the density of Latimer’s book, and



Thanks to Latimer, I am more convinced of the necessity for decision-making on a large scale to deal with large problems.

of such a wide-ranging, comprehensive purview, is that I came away feeling more stumped by individual cases of localism's failures than convinced by an overarching vision. Where Latimer's book seems weakest is the philosophy underpinning his analysis, what he calls a consequentialist and welfarist approach: the belief that it is the consequences of our actions that matter rather than intentions, and that we should base our decisions on what is good for people's welfare—defined as “what makes people's lives go well.”

“Although I have my own views about what matters for people's welfare,” Latimer writes, “I'm keeping things vague intentionally. We disagree about what makes people's lives go well.” But how do we judge whether people's lives are going well? When people disagree about what is needed for life to go well, how do we know who is right?

The issue becomes clearer in Latimer's analysis about the “argument from nature,” which holds that we should organize society around smaller social units because smaller groups are more natural to human beings. One could agree or disagree with this statement based on all kinds of evidence; Latimer argues against it by discussing recent scholarship in paleoanthropology. But regardless of what the evidence may show, Latimer insists, “Facts about human nature do not tell us how we ought to organize our social lives.... Facts about biology, custom, and tradition are useful, but it is up to us to decide what to do with them.”

Many religious and philosophical traditions, including Christianity, hold that nature is normative. Certainly, what counts as “natural” is contested. But if we don't admit that what is natural gives at least some indication of the choices we should make, then we don't have much basis to adjudicate different claims about “what makes people's lives go well.”

Also in the chapter about the argument from nature, Latimer mentions the concept of subsidiarity in Catholic social teaching and offers a secular version for consideration. He writes that many localists see subsidiarity as an automatic argument for localism. But he points out, correctly, that subsidiarity means finding the appropriate level of government for making particular decisions or carrying out certain functions—and that this could be a bigger or even global decision-making body. How do we know what appropriate means?

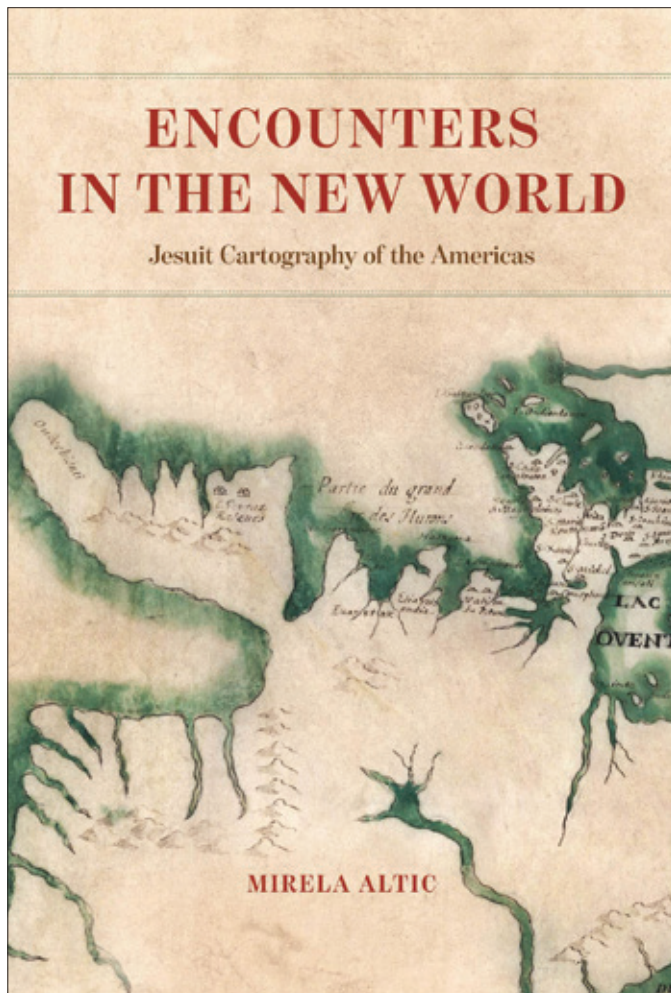
“Catholic social doctrine has a view of the social order in which appropriate functions are revealed by reason,” he writes. But Latimer also believes that “the associations and organizations that are the best ones for the job—the ones that make people's lives go better—are appropriate.” Again, how do we know?

Perhaps there is nothing eternally fixed about which level of government is best at dealing with a given issue. But might there be tendencies, and might these tendencies be based on the kinds of relationships and communities people are able to form within those structures? In his chapter about the argument from nature, Latimer observes, “When pressed, communitarians will admit that what they care about is the character of people's relationships with one another in different settings, not size as such. But I think they are committed to arguing that the kinds of relationships they value are impossible in communities that exceed their natural limits, and the most important limits are physical and spatial.”

Localists may be committed to the latter point; I am not sure communitarians are. Latimer is right that we need to find the right scale for the job, and he is right to critique localists for assuming that this scale is the smallest one possible. But “the character of people's relationships” seems incidental in Latimer's analysis, where it should be a primary consideration, perhaps one that sometimes outweighs other considerations.

Regina Munch is an associate editor of *Commonweal*.

A MAP OF THE WORLD



University of Chicago Press / 433p \$75

Writers and historians who study the Jesuits have an unusual problem: too much information. The Society of Jesus was arguably the world's first global nonprofit organization, with a geographic footprint that spanned six continents and a portfolio of activity that included everything from empire-building to education, poetry to paleontology. As early as 400 years ago, the Jesuits also had what amounted to a worldwide postal system. They meticulously documented their work, leaving behind a long paper trail of letters, maps and other correspondence to their superiors in Rome. It was as if they recognized their own historical significance and were determined to record it for posterity.

All of this makes writing a “history of the Jesuits” as daunting as writing a “history of music” or a “history of warfare.” With records scattered across hundreds of libraries thousands of miles apart, where does a well-meaning historian even begin? Even the most ambitious authors, like John O’Malley, S.J., and Gerald McKeivitt, S.J., have often limited their studies of the Jesuits to a specific time,

place or theme.

We can now add a new author to that list: Mirela Altic, who has given the world the first comprehensive study of Jesuit mapmaking in the Americas. *Encounters in the New World* tells the story of Jesuit cartography during the Age of Exploration—when Jesuit missionaries played a crucial role as conduits among cultures, becoming bridges that allowed knowledge to flow between Europeans and Indigenous Americans. Combining European mathematical techniques with the knowledge of the peoples they evangelized, Jesuits produced the first modern maps of many parts of Mexico, South America, the Great Lakes and Canada.

Simply collecting all of this information in one place is an accomplishment. The original copies of the maps reproduced here are stored in dozens of different locations across Europe and the Americas. Identifying the links between documents that have collected dust for centuries in Madrid, Mexico City and Montreal is like putting together a puzzle after the pieces have been scattered across the world. Altic brings a wealth of knowledge about cartography and explores the techniques as well as the motivations—political, religious and beyond—of its Jesuit authors.

In the process, Altic draws attention to the fact that maps—particularly in their 17th-century form—were simultaneously art and artifact. Mapmaking was both an art and a science, with all the shortcomings of both fields. Like art, it was subjective, as when Jesuit mapmakers drew special attention to places where one of their own had been martyred or misjudged the reliability of local legends about places they had never seen firsthand. Like science, mapmaking was prone to petty disputes about authorship and closed-mindedness to different methodologies. Each map is a reflection of the person who drew it, designed for purposes as innocent as finding one’s way home or as opportunistic as finding gold and silver deposits.

The stories collected here also show that while the Jesuits were agents of colonization, their separate organizational structure and religious goals sometimes set them apart from European governments. The marriages between church and state in the Portuguese, Spanish and French empires were matters of convenience at times. Some Jesuits acted as representatives of the crown, commanded small armies and expanded their country’s territory; others were genuinely interested in the salvation of souls. The maps they produced reflect this, whether they highlighted the locations of Indigenous villages that needed access to the sacraments or drew attention to rivers and lakes that could be used as trade routes.

Often, Jesuit priests were left to explore regions of the Americas that had little obvious commercial value to



Altic draws attention to the fact that mapmaking was both an art and a science, with all the shortcomings of both fields.

secular authorities. Jesuits drew many of the first maps of Baja California, Chile, Patagonia and Paraguay. By learning the language of the native peoples and building missions among them, the Jesuits expanded European knowledge of places that held little interest to merchants and traders. When some of those regions, like the large Jesuit missions (*reducciones*) in Paraguay, began to generate profits, governments often stepped in to suppress the Jesuits and collect taxes and resources for themselves.

Encounters in the New World shows how inseparable the Jesuit experience has been from the story and fate of the Americas. It is a reminder that some large and important cities like São Paulo in Brazil were built atop Jesuit missions. It is also a reminder of how diverse the Jesuits were. Although the empires they served were Spanish, Portuguese or French, individual Jesuit priests came from cultures across Europe. Altic introduces us to the Hungarian-Croatian astronomer Ignatius Szentmártonyi and the Italian mathematician Giovanni Brunelli, who mapped the Amazon in service to Portugal, as well as Slovak-born János Szluha, who did the same for Spain. One of the most famous cartographers in the Spanish Empire was Eusebio Kino, who hailed from the Alpine regions straddling Italy and Germany.

Almost all maps described in the text are depicted in illustrations. It is sometimes unclear which illustration corresponds to which description. Black-and-white images are embedded on the relevant pages, but nearly 50 color maps are reproduced on plates that appear dozens of pages before or after they are mentioned in the text. It would have been helpful to point readers to “Plate 10” or “Plate 20”

when appropriate, but that feature is surprisingly absent.

To fully appreciate the story Altic tells, it helps to have a deep familiarity with the geography of Latin America. Otherwise the long lists of city names, river names and physical features can seem hollow. Those who lack a mental map of the small towns of Ecuador, Mexico and Venezuela should read this book with a modern-day atlas handy—or, at least, with access to the internet.

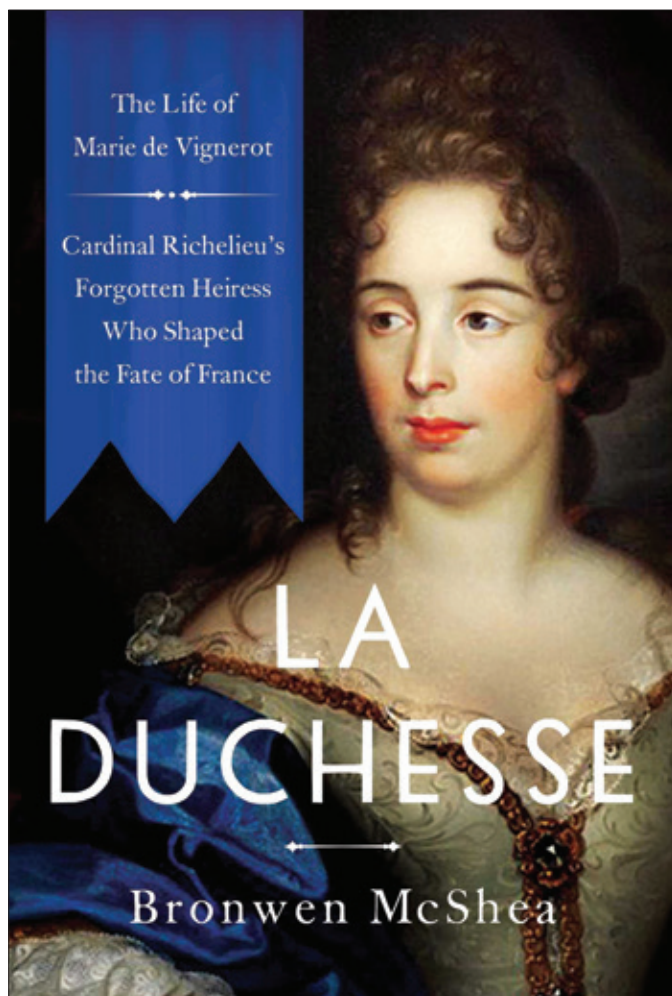
For North American readers, the most relatable chapters may be those about the Jesuit exploration of New France, including Jacques Marquette’s mapping of the Mississippi in 1673 and Claude Allouez’s mapping of Lake Superior in 1665. Altic also offers a reminder that Spanish Jesuits first arrived in Florida in 1566. Although their Florida missions were small, short-lived and relatively inconsequential, they predated the first English-speaking Jesuit missions in Maryland by nearly 70 years.

Unfortunately, the North American section of the book is short (only 10 percent of the total) and ends with the expulsion of the French from Canada after the French and Indian War. It does not explore the role Jesuits like Pierre DeSmet and Nicholas Point played in mapping the U.S. frontier in the 19th century.

In any history of the Jesuits, authors must make choices about what to omit and where to begin and end the story. Altic limits her scope to the colonial era, but as is often the case with the Jesuits, even that limited scope yields an enormous amount of information. Fortunately, most of the story is now in one place in Altic’s volume.

Michael T. Rizzi is the author of *Jesuit Colleges and Universities in the United States: A History* and is director of student affairs at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine.

COURT AND CONVENT



Pegasus Books / 480p \$29

I have been struck at various times by how women are represented in church art of previous eras—strong, intelligent, virtuous—versus recent centuries’ banal, somewhat one-dimensional depictions of women. Art both inspires and is inspired by ideas. The banal can go a long way in helping one to understand the responses of various types of feminism. It seems like we lost something along the way.

Bronwen McShea’s recent book *La Duchesse* chronicles the life of Marie de Vignerot, the niece, protégé and heiress of Cardinal Richelieu. Richelieu, an ordained cleric and a cardinal—and a controversial figure in French and church history—served as chief minister to King Louis XIII in the 17th century. Up until now, his niece’s dynamic life, if acknowledged at all, was cast as the narrative of a pious wealthy widow who gave money to people like St. Vincent de Paul, one of the most popular saints in the Catholic Church. She and St. Vincent were close friends and collaborators who often disagreed—as only good friends can. McShea suggests that de Vignerot may have been a deter-

mining force in helping St. Vincent become a great saint. After looking at the evidence provided by McShea, it is hard to see otherwise; the passive, meek narrative for de Vignerot falls apart.

McShea writes about a prominent Catholic figure in the manner of a true scholar: She is looking for the truth. If you want hagiography, look elsewhere. Here is the story of a woman who loved someone she was not allowed to marry and instead married someone her uncle insisted upon, which was not uncommon in those days. After a few years of what appeared to be an unsatisfying marriage, her husband died and she tried religious life. Again, her uncle intervened and brought her into his home, taking her on as his protégé. A prayerful person, she was at ease both in the convent and in courtly society, embracing the arts, fashion and—most importantly—politics.

We see her come into her own as she refuses many offers of marriage, including one from her first love, who pursues her again once her husband dies. We also see evidence of her deep faith, even as she falls in love with a cardinal who is not an ordained cleric and who might have been cheating on her. After his death and the death of her uncle, she steps fully into a remarkable role where, not unlike her uncle, she sees no conflict between the interests of the Catholic Church and France.

De Vignerot’s support for missions in the Americas, Africa and Asia all seem sincerely motivated by a deep faith, based on the evidence provided by McShea. At other times, they also seem motivated by a desire to expand or secure the power of France by means of the church.

She leads an effort to have Pope Alexander VII declare four new missionary dioceses, all of which would be controlled by France. The Vatican, still controlling the Papal States, shares with France the desire to restrain the influence of Spain and Portugal as economic powers; those two empires happened to be dominating the church’s missionary areas, not to mention parts of European trade routes as well.

As peers, the cardinal, and then his niece, shared special powers with the king. To readers of our era, this comes across as absurd elitism and underscores the fact that political systems tend to be works in progress.

Rather than simply a patron, de Vignerot comes across as an extremely capable C.E.O. She maneuvers in the political world while at the same time trying to unite her faith to her secular activities. At times, it is hard to tell which is her priority, but it’s also hard to think of very many other leaders, clerical or lay, who have worked so diligently to incorporate their faith into the highest levels of governance. Most impressively, de Vignerot does this all at a time when

a woman cannot hold political office.

I was struck by McShea's mention of the "Great Man tradition of historical scholarship," which she notes "obscured the stories of some truly great women," not just Marie de Vignerot. This makes me wonder how much inspiration this historical censorship has cost us. McShea's book covers a particular historical period tremendously well, including research that has not been published before. It will likely serve as a substantial resource for scholars researching many key figures whose lives overlapped with that of the duchess.

However, I do wish she had explored the "Great Man tradition" a bit more because it could explain a lot about the Catholic and secular culture that subsequent centuries and generations have inherited. The art of bygone eras communicates a strength in women that has been hidden for several centuries. McShea's book only strengthens my belief that we have a lot to recover before we can move forward.

McShea tells the countess's story on the basis of historical evidence. There is so much of it that there is little need for conjecture. In the end, we come to know a woman who may very well have been a saint, one who had a major impact on France and the presence of the Catholic faith in missionary lands.

De Vignerot's motivations seem to have been mixed at times, and she worked in a system that was far from perfect. But as many great saints have reminded us, the saint is not the perfect person of hagiographies; the saint is the person who gets up again and again. The evidence suggests that Marie de Vignerot did not allow her failings or imperfections to separate her from God, a lesson we can all use.

Pia de Solenni is a moral theologian, ethicist and cultural analyst.

The Grail Quest

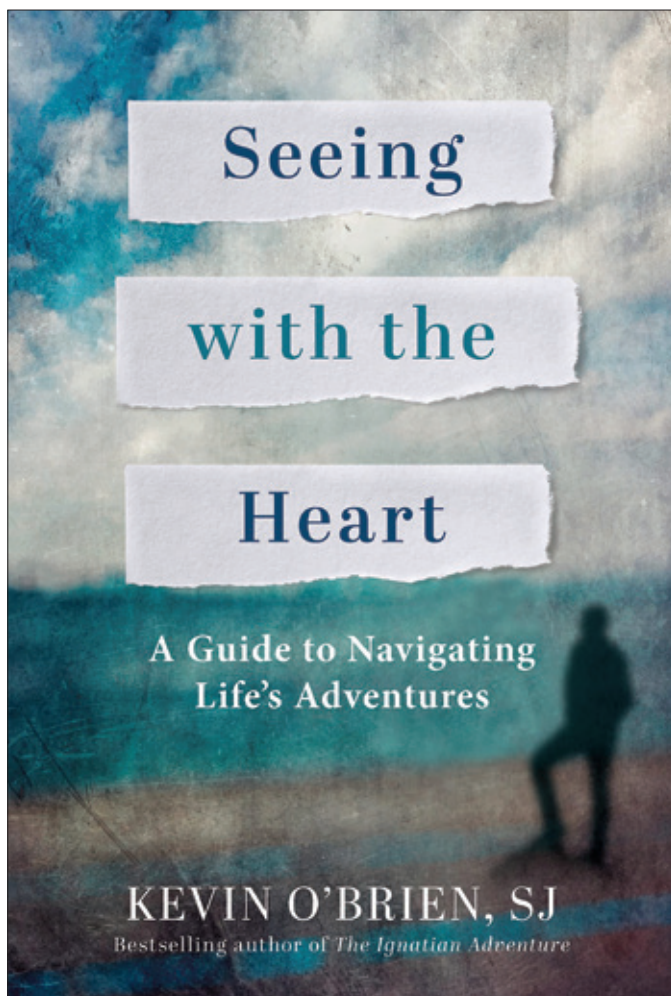
By Amit Majmudar

Perceval almost pierced the veil,
never uttered a Christ-laced curse.
Purity of heart is to will one thing,
wrote Kierkegaard before the churchyards
turned charnel houses in excruciated Europe.
Was it a Lapis Exilis, mother meteorite,
or a lapis lazuli dish set with wished-
for cuts of fresh meat in a famine culture,
or a cup that caught the red of revelation?
Chrétien de Troyes recounted the trials,
but I trust no poet pimping a tale.
I figure the Grails were detours en route
to a single failure, and all this suffering
night after night in shining ardor,
in rosary-haunted Brocéliande,
just served to stir the gallant heart
of a Galahad to attempt and test
truth by joust, pursuing the relic, the elixir
on a pilgrim trail to the impossible castle.

As a bony boy, a squirt of a squire,
I imagined its magic in verbal terms,
an infinite inkwell, a song Sangraal,
heartsblood held in the mouth's round
brimmed, overbrimmed, meniscal cupola.
Wondering whether my words were worthy.
I sallied forth in search of a form,
May the poem, grasped and penned, be the Grail
sustaining hearts healed for a spell,
fed in their hunger not heavenly manna
but humbly kneaded human bread.

Amit Majmudar is the author of Black Avatar: and Other Essays and Twin A: A Memoir. He works as a diagnostic radiologist in Westerville, Ohio. His poem "Abyssfishing" appears on Page 63.

BEHOLDERS OF THE HOLY



Loyola Press / 160p \$20

In his new book, *Seeing With the Heart: A Guide to Navigating Life's Adventures*, Kevin O'Brien, S.J., thoughtfully crafts a true guide for living a life of compassion, meaning and depth. The book provides a reflective pause to holistically look at our lives, with all of their twists and turns of grace and challenge, and consider how we are living in relationship to ourselves, others and the divine.

O'Brien shares his great knowledge of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius in an approachable way for an expansive audience, weaving in poetry, Scripture and stories from his own life and those of others. The book is ultimately an invitation to live, as St. Ignatius writes, with magnanimity, inspiring us to be "great-souled" people attentive to the needs of others, clear in our integrity, rooted in hope and as "beholders of the holy."

Seeing With the Heart is composed in a way that facilitates reflection, presenting key themes of moving through life as a pilgrim: living with purpose, living the questions, living with depth, living in freedom, living out of great de-

sires, living with compassion, living in hope and living with discernment. At the end of every chapter, O'Brien provides brief spiritual exercises: reflection questions and prompts to integrate the substance of the chapters into the particulars of one's life.

An invitation of the book is not only to intentionality, but to joy. O'Brien writes, "Joy comes when we live out of the deepest sense of who we are, when we let God and others come close, when we offer our lives in the service of others, when we rest in the stillness and beauty of our world." The invitation to live deliberately and wholeheartedly is a pathway not necessarily to ease but surely to joy, because we keep our gaze on purpose, as expressed in the First Principle and Foundation at the start of the Spiritual Exercises.

O'Brien writes that living with purpose entails living with attentiveness—that is, "attention both to where we are walking and to the distant horizon: not so focused on our end that we miss out on what is right around us, not so focused on what's around us that we lose sight of the end that keeps us on track." A purposeful life trusts in the solid ground of deep commitment and conviction, even when the path is rocky or the road windy.

A few years ago I established a holistic wellness practice called Presence and Reverence, so a favorite part of the book for me is the section on cultivating a sacramental imagination, something that indeed requires both presence and reverence. Our imagination and attentiveness to even the most ordinary of things can bring forth awareness of the sacred in our midst. O'Brien writes, "Seeing with the heart, everything shimmers brilliantly—if we are open to it. Golden wheat blowing in the wind. Water running over dishes. A sun setting across a ballpark." If we notice and delight in the mundane, ordinary moments can become transcendent.

O'Brien asserts that with delight comes duty: "We treat people with dignity and we reverence God's creation." Our Creator is calling out to us at all times, hoping to catch our attention to perhaps just rest for a moment in beauty, and also to not be the same because of it. We are invited "to come into the peace of wild things" and "rest in the grace of the world," as Wendell Berry has written, and also to labor for a more just and gentle world. A life devoted to holy mystery does not separate these out, but lives both as one call.

The duty, O'Brien writes, is to a life of compassion. O'Brien points to Pope Francis' vision of a church of encounter, one which is "bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and clinging to its own security." Encounter risks closeness to another's chaos and demonstrates the power of tenderness in a world so far from being tender. O'Brien pulls the word *splagchnizomai*

from the Gospels, a word that describes a physical, deep response, that we find when Jesus encounters someone in need—the word used when the father sees his younger son approaching home in the story of the prodigal son, and again in the story of the good Samaritan, when the Samaritan traveler is deeply moved at the sight of a stranger in pain.

It is this kind of compassion that flows from integrated reverence and this kind of compassion that ultimately makes us more human and brings our world closer in kinship. O'Brien underscores upholding others' dignity and striving toward solidarity with the marginalized as concrete steps toward a "revolution of tenderness," to quote Pope Francis.

The text, subtitled "A Guide to Navigating Life's Adventures," does not gloss over the real pain, suffering and loss that we encounter in our lifetime. He appreciates that there are real reasons for lament in our individual lives and in the world in which we find ourselves. Living with depth does not skirt around pain but cries out knowing it with rawness. We weep as Jesus did. Love opens us up to pain, and "love does not run," as O'Brien writes. Love sometimes looks like grief, for grief is love-preserving.

O'Brien includes the insight of Richard Rohr, O.F.M., that "healers who have fully faced their wounds are the only ones who heal anyone else." Perhaps we might hold our pain or loss or grief with the same reverence with which we would gaze upon wild geese flying overhead on a misty morning—all wrapped up in greater mystery. We hold onto the promise that in death life is changed, not ended. Hope is the virtue of the pilgrim, O'Brien writes; resurrection will follow and hope will come. It is our promise.

Insights on discernment, a great gift and always-relevant tool offered to us by St. Ignatius, are an essential part of O'Brien's text. "Ignatian discernment is a sturdy rudder that allows us to navigate the various currents on our pilgrim journey," he writes, "and to become 'in sync' with God's gracious outreach."

As a spiritual director, I will be sharing O'Brien's chapter on discernment with directees and colleagues for years to come. He shares wisdom and practical advice for understanding Ignatian writings on the discernment of spirits, making decisions and growing in spiritual awareness. He imparts that in living with discernment, our unique destinations are revealed rather than dictated: "We do our best to follow God's lead, and then we trust that God is with us, wherever we land. God, who is generous and creative, will get us where we need to go, even if by a circuitous route."

Seeing With the Heart is a gift to all of us on the journey. It is a book to keep on our nightstand and send to a friend, for it inspires a real look at our living and a prod to authenticity and wholeness—not only for ourselves but

for the healing of our world. It is a treasure of a guide to hold close on our journey, as we move toward, in O'Brien's words, "that loving Mystery which summoned us all along."

Katie Dorner is an Ignatian spiritual director and founder of a holistic wellness practice, *Presence and Reverence*. She currently serves as director of human concerns and adult formation at the Church of the Gesu in Milwaukee, Wis.

Abyssfishing

By Amit Majmudar

If you wonder
what that clicking
whizzing shirring
is, it's me, fly-

fishing over
this abyss in
hopes of snagging
pike or grayling

or some deeper
biolumi-
nescent grouper,
flinging forth my

shiver-feathered
fly like prayer
arcing sinking
through the air in

search of any
water down there—
some sustaining,
tensile surface

with a face for
spirit to be
moving on, my
slow and opal-

eyed salvation
salmon waiting
silently as
thought below it.

Amit Majmudar is the author of *Black Avatar: and Other Essays* and *Twin A: A Memoir*. He works as a diagnostic radiologist in Westerville, Ohio. His poem "The Grail Quest" appears on Page 61.

An Apprentice Learns to Discern the Unseen World

In January, the liturgical year provides a brief pause between Christmas and Lent. During these weeks of Ordinary Time, the readings highlight the nature of divine calls and human responses. As such, a biblical pattern of discernment emerges: the need to listen, the capacity to respond, the work of interpretation and repetition when needed. It is all reminiscent of Pope Francis' invitation to the church to discern together in the "synodal way." It is a messy process because it is a human process. It becomes a divine process to those who are open to the word of God in their everyday lives. The Sunday readings throughout the month of January reveal a scriptural path for reading the signs of the times.

On the Second Sunday in Ordinary Time, a young

prophet Samuel learns how to discern. "Here I am," he said to the elderly priest Eli, "You called me." Eli answered, "I did not call you, my son. Go back to sleep" (1 Sm 3:6). Notice the importance of intergenerational wisdom in the temple as Samuel trains to be Israel's next prophetic voice. Eli is the elder who guides and teaches the youthful Samuel how to listen and respond to God's voice. The responsorial psalm for that same Sunday reinforces this insight: "You opened my ears.... Behold, I come" (Ps 40:7-8). Likewise, the Gospel passage from John on that Sunday talks about discernment from Jesus' perspective. When the disciples asked him where he was staying, he invited them: "Come, and you will see" (Jn 1:39). They did so, and followed him for the rest of their lives.

THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD (B), JAN. 7, 2024

Mysteries Made Known Through Revelation

SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (B), JAN. 14, 2024

An Apprentice Learns to Discern the Unseen World

THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (B), JAN. 21, 2024

Humble Steps Toward a Path to Justice

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (B), JAN. 28, 2024

A New Teaching That Commands Even the Unclean Spirit



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



Stay up to date with 'The Word' all month long.
All of these columns can be found online.

Read More Online

Visit: www.americamagazine.org/word or scan the QR code with your smartphone.



**WE ARE
SEEKING
PRIEST
FORMATORS**
TO PREPARE TOMORROW'S
PARISH PRIESTS

**POPE ST. JOHN XXIII NATIONAL SEMINARY
WESTON, MASSACHUSETTS**

Preparing older candidates for the Priesthood for over 60 years

If interested, please contact:
Very Rev. Brian R. Kiely, Rector
Telephone: 781-810-2013
Email: rev.kiely@psjs.edu

www.psjs.edu



**CUSTOM STATUES
OF THE SACRED**



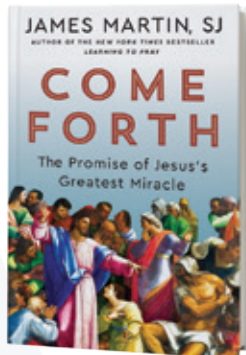
Bronze – Marble – Fiberglass
We can create a beautiful and meaningful masterpiece for your church or organization. And it is cast in Italy, handmade in Italy in just 20 days.
— For more information, contact: —
Gregory B. Casco, President
CST CO.
815-256-5963
www.customstatues.com
www.facebook.com/cstco
email: csc@custat.com

The online discussion group for *America* readers interested in quality

While we might look new, the Catholic Book Club has actually been around for many decades in different forms. Our goal has always been to provide *America* readers with additional literary resources and to come together around our shared enjoyment of and appreciation for fine works of literature. We introduce a new book four times a year, providing discussion questions, conversation prompts and supporting materials that you can use individually or with your home, parish or school group.

CURRENT FEATURED BOOK

In *Come Forth: The Promise of Jesus's Greatest Miracle*, James Martin, S.J., draws readers into the story of the raising of Lazarus—and into the spiritual lessons we can all learn from it.



Join us at
americamagazine.org/cbc

Fostering vocations in men over 30 SINCE 1970



shsst.edu/vocation

CONTACT **Deacon Steve Kramer:**
skramer@shsst.edu | 414-858-4767



**SACRED
HEART**
Seminary and
School of Theology

www.shsst.edu | HALES CORNERS, WI

How to Prepare for the 2024 Election

Start a routine, and be disciplined about it | By Bill McCormick



The next U.S. general election is on Nov. 5. What are you doing to prepare for it?

Here is my guess: You don't want to tune in, but you will, and you will do so in ways that unwittingly reinforce your desire to avoid politics. But how can you hope to be a good citizen that way?

Many Americans are trying to avoid thinking about the election this far out. It is not just that we find the campaigns distasteful or depressing; we may not think we have a meaningful voice in the process. Besides, most of us already know how we are going to vote, even if we are not happy about it.

And yet, we will get sucked in. We will enjoy it when a candidate we don't like falls into scandal. We will watch viral sound bites that simultaneously enrage and delight us. We will read a social media post and, worse, the comments, and then get into a pointless online fight with a stranger. We will catch disturbing headlines that compel us to dive deeper into an article before we decide we don't want to know any more. Our conscience will push us to engage for a moment, only to be discouraged again.

Having gone down the rabbit hole (sewer drain?) of U.S. politics, we may emerge no wiser but more frustrated, determined to leave all of it behind. Then we will repeat the cycle.

But does anything else in your life benefit from the boom-and-bust cycle that characterizes your political attention? Diet? Exercise? Cleaning?

Citizenship calls for discipline, or

the training of our hearts and minds on what merits our attention, rather than on all things that distract us. Instead of oscillating between apathy and engrossment, what if we learned to follow political life in a sustained and sustainable way? If we elevated the campaign season into a period of discernment and encounter?

My suggestion: Take the next few months as an experiment. Pay attention to the campaigns, but decide *how much* attention you are going to pay, and stick to it. Escape the cycle of engagement and disillusionment. You will find that the discipline satisfies something human in you.

Here are some suggestions to help you do it.

Read something about U.S. politics. It does not have to be directly about the election. You might read the U.S. Constitution, or Pope Francis' "Laudato Si'," or "Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship" from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. Perhaps there is an article or book you have been meaning to read on race, fiscal policy or American history. Now is a good time to do it.

Talk to someone. This is a reality check: Did you fully understand what you read? Either way, you may find this an opportunity to connect with someone whom you respect or admire, whether in person or by sending a letter to an author. This step helps you to make the move from ideas to persons. Come to grips with what is at stake and why someone would care, especially

someone who thinks and lives differently than you.

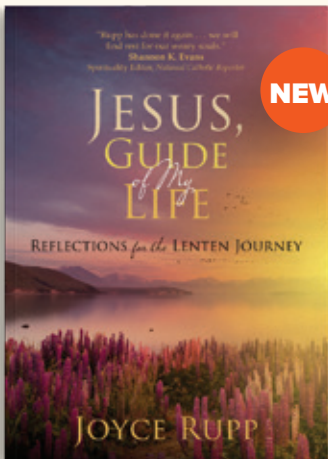
Sit and think. This is the hardest part. Don't run away from the thoughts, however unpleasant they are. Create a space where these ideas can come into conversation with your experiences, where the opinions of those you admire can challenge you, or where some of the implications of those ideas for your life can come out. In the best-case scenario, you will discover some questions you want to pursue, or people with whom you want to explore more of the topic.

So read something, talk to someone about it, and sit and think about it. Do this weekly. As with physical exercise, the goal is to establish a routine. I promise: Engaging political life in a disciplined, sustained way will be more fruitful than an on-again, off-again attitude, and it will feel better.

Exercising virtuous citizenship is challenging even under the best circumstances. But like so much else in life, it helps to see it as a series of manageable tasks. So I urge you: read something, talk to someone about it, then sit and think about it. Then do that again. You have most of this year to try it!

Bill McCormick, S.J., is a contributing editor at *America*, chief mission officer at St. John's College in Belize City and a research fellow in the Department of Political Science at Saint Louis University.

REFLECTIONS for the LENTEN JOURNEY



In *Jesus, Guide of My Life*, bestselling and award-winning author and retreat leader Joyce Rupp takes us by the hand this Lent to explore the words and actions of Jesus in the gospels so that his teachings and living presence can inspire our spiritual transformation.

128 pages, \$13.95

“Points us back to our foundation.”

—Shannon K. Evans

Spirituality editor, *National Catholic Reporter*
and author of *Feminist Prayers for My Daughter*



Look for this title wherever
books and eBooks are sold.

America

CLASSIFIEDS MARKETPLACE

Revelation and Healing:

A Father and Son Reunion recounts the author’s slow journey from an adoption that left him longing for his biological parents and wondering if he had any Black blood. He was assured he did not. Discovering, while in high school, his mother’s identity, years later he found that of his biological father, Lionel Durand (1920–1961), a Black man born in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. Suddenly the author realized the source of his own immediate empathy as a boy with Martin Luther King Jr. and the civil rights movement he led. The author shares the often- shocking details of his adoption and the grounding therapies which facilitated self-acceptance. With filial admiration, the author traces the life of his beloved father, Lionel Durand, friends with Jean Cocteau and Picasso, an internationally acclaimed newsman and journalist, who fought in the French Resistance during World War II, twice imprisoned, twice escaped. Welcome to this reading journey and its wondrous surprises.



Lionel Durand's cover painting of his mixed-race daughter, Barbara. Same Black father as the author, a different White mom.



Lionel Durand
broadcasting
for Voice of America

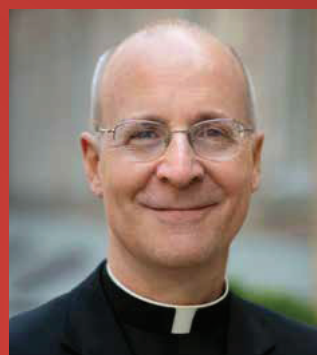
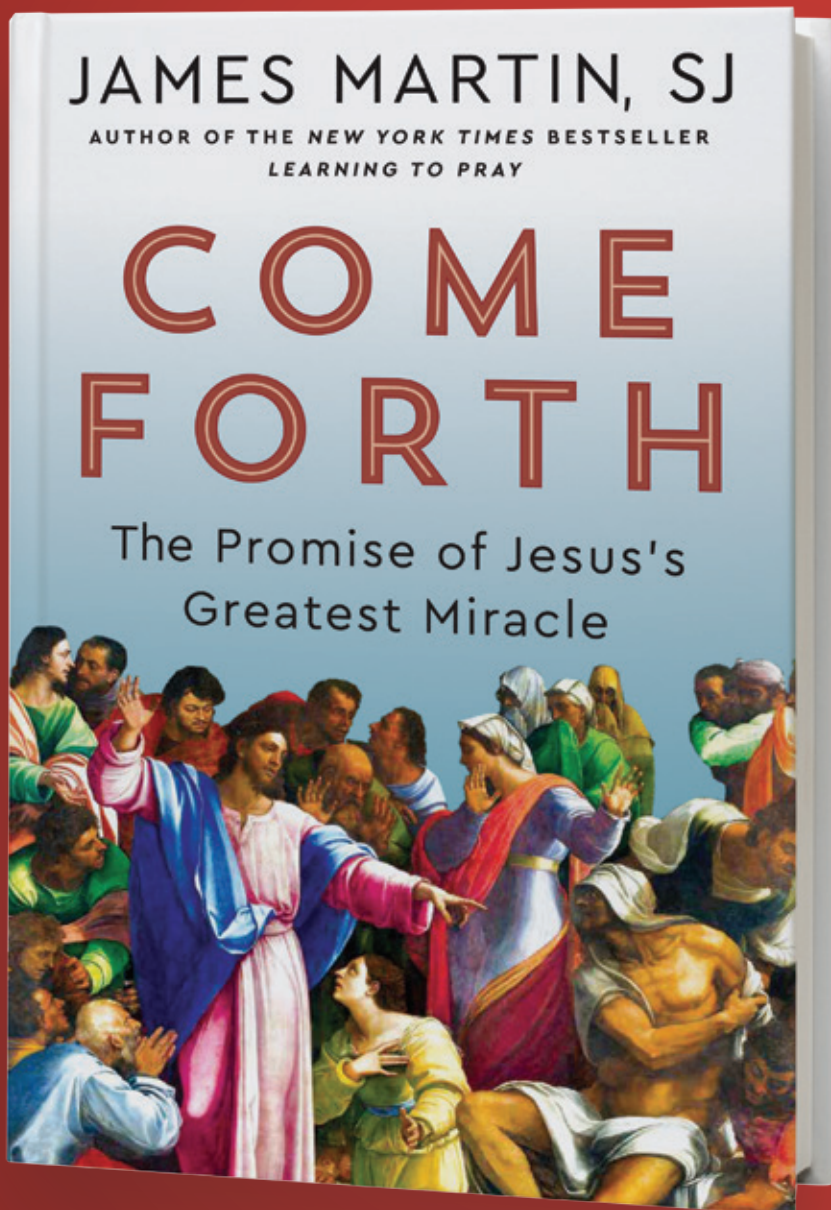
New from James Martin, SJ

COME FORTH

James Martin, SJ

Author of the New York Times
bestseller *Learning to Pray*

Discover how the Raising of Lazarus invites you to new Life.



“God calls each of us into a new life, inviting us to leave behind whatever is dead. But how? James Martin’s magnificent new book on the Raising of Lazarus shows us! He dives deep into the Gospel story to reveal how Jesus’s greatest miracle can help each of us experience the new life that God promises. *Come Forth* is a spiritual masterpiece.”

RICHARD ROHR, OFM,
author of *The Universal Christ*

“James Martin—arguably our greatest writer priest—has penned a genius meditation on the Raising of Lazarus. It’s a travel story and a spiritual manual to renewing one’s faith. I read it in one sitting and came away with a deeper hope that grace alone can call me out of whatever tomb I’ve buried myself in. Destined to be read and reread forever. Bravo!”

MARY KARR,
author of *The Liars’ Club* and *Lit: A Memoir*

On-Sale Now!
Available now wherever books are sold.