

America

JUNE 2022

THE JESUIT ... H AND C

DO WE REALLY HONOR MOTHER- HOOD?

Another look at
the debate over
Roe v. Wade

Rachel Lu

p20

PLUS:

The Editors:
Imagining Society
After Roe

p8

Catholic Hospitals
and the A.C.L.U.:
A Dialogue

p38

A Stolen Tabernacle
at Corpus Christi
Church

p42



HEALTH CARE ISSUE

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Editor at Large, America Magazine
Building a Bridge: Outreach to LGBTQ+ Catholics

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- *Future Skills for Future Leaders*, Robert Feduccia
- *Forming Young Women in the Church—Academic and Pastoral Perspectives*, JoAnn Melina Lopez and Brianne Jacobs
- *Trauma-Aware Communities*, Mike Carotta
- *Building a Media Ministry*, Sherry Hayes-Peirce
- *Restlessness: Does our Church Encourage it or Cause it?*, Fr. Tom McCarthy, OSA
- *Searching for Gospel Authenticity*, Anna Johnson

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A Brave New World?

In the summer of 1869, a 27-year-old Buffalo businessman and veteran of the Battle of Gettysburg boarded a steamship and set out on a weeks-long tour of the shoreline of Lake Erie. Like many others his age before and since, Nelson Henry Baker was in search of that someone or something that would give meaning and direction to his life. By summer's end he knew what it was: He wanted to be a priest.

So the following autumn Nelson Baker entered the seminary in Buffalo. During a pilgrimage to Europe with his fellow seminarians, he had a profound spiritual experience at the shrine of Our Lady of Victories in Paris and at once resolved to return to his hometown and spend his life in her service. What followed was a breathtaking, trailblazing six-decades-long apostolic career that rivals the earthly accomplishments of our greatest saints. In Lackawanna, N.Y., just south of Buffalo, Father Baker built what amounted to a small “city of charity”—a network of hospitals, schools, orphanages and other social services that in his time would serve tens of thousands of people and serves thousands more even today.

I visited this Baker-ville and its one-of-a-kind French Rococo minor basilica the week after we learned that the U.S. Supreme Court is likely to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, the case that established a constitutional right to abortion. One might think that this news, as well as the fiercely contested debate that it has sparked, are light years away from Father Baker's America, that his time has little to say to ours. And yet an important part of his story suggests otherwise.

In the spring of 1906, Father Bak-

er started to read newspaper accounts of babies who had been abandoned, including “the remains of over two hundred little ones...found in different stages of decay” in the Buffalo area. His biographer describes his response: “Mortified at such a wanton destruction of life, Baker, always a man of action, knew something needed to be done.” He quickly established a home where mothers could leave their babies anonymously, no questions asked. But Father Baker did not act just to save the infants' lives; he worked to save the lives and reputations of the mothers as well. “Our motive has been, regardless of experience,” he wrote, “to protect the unfortunate young mother and her family, and to save the life of the child.”

Nelson Baker then was quick to recognize two realities, one of which is usually disregarded in conversations about abortion, then and now. Father Baker was rightly horrified by the intentional killing of these vulnerable human beings. And he was also rightly horrified by the fact that he lived in a world in which women could be driven to such extremes. In his revulsion, Father Baker could have hardened his heart and turned in self-righteous rage against these mothers. Instead, he extended the same compassion to them that had caused his heart to break when reading reports about their babies, reasoning that any woman who could summon the will to override her primordial maternal instinct and take her child's life had to be someone in desperate straits, someone as worthy of our mercy as her children were.

Debates about abortion today are too often polemical, impersonal, unfeeling. Too many on both sides resort

to name-calling, to uncharitable hyperbole, or cruel caricatures. People who are pro-choice are called “baby killers.” People who are pro-life are said to be “waging a war against women.” Neither charge is fair or helpful, or human. “What is most needed in the public debate on abortion,” the editors write in this issue, “is an honest moral reckoning with the two goods that are in tension when a woman faces a pregnancy she feels she cannot continue: her bodily integrity and personal autonomy, and the dignity of the unborn life that is entirely dependent on her.”

Another way of putting that? We need fewer polemics and much more compassion, especially of the kind Venerable Father Baker put into action. What he started as a home for infants who had been abandoned by their mothers rapidly grew to become a maternity hospital as well, where unwed or troubled pregnant women could be cared for in safety and anonymity. In time, that became Our Lady of Victory Hospital, which served the people of Lackawanna—men, women and children—for more than 80 years.

All that happened because Father Baker opened his heart and mind to the people around him, a choice that also set him on his path to sainthood. In writing to the benefactors of his home for infants and mothers, Father Baker would often include this sentence: “The spirit of charity will surely save innumerable souls.”

He might have added: “Starting with your own.”

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



THE ISSUE

GIVE AND TAKE

6

YOUR TAKE

Is there a better way to pray the Our Father?

8

OUR TAKE

The end of *Roe v Wade* can be the beginning of a new movement for human dignity

10

SHORT TAKE

The church can help prevent sexual violence—by doing a better job teaching about sex
Shelby Kearns

DISPATCHES

12

AN IDENTITY CRISIS
IN CATHOLIC HIGHER
EDUCATION?

A Map of Post-Roe America

Civil liberties are casualties in an
anti-gang war in El Salvador

GoodNews: Palm Sunday at the
periphery in Belize

A turf battle in Ireland

FEATURES

20

THE HIGH COST OF
MOTHERHOOD

Children have enormous needs that
cannot be met by laws alone

Rachel Lu

28

PAYING TO PLAY BALL

What happens when capitalism meets
Little League?

John W. Miller

FAITH & REASON

38

COMMON GROUND AMID
DISAGREEMENT

The A.C.L.U. and Catholic Health
Care

Charles Bouchard and
Anthony Rothert



CNS photo/Elizabeth Franz, Reuters

Abortion demonstrators outside the U.S. Supreme Court in Washington on May 3.

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FAITH IN FOCUS

42

WHERE CHRIST DWELLS

How a stolen tabernacle made clearer my belief in the real presence

Sonja Livingston

46

My name has been in my family for seven generations. Here's what I hope it means for the next.

John Dougherty

JESUIT SCHOOL SPOTLIGHT

48

'GOOD TEACHING IS GOOD TEACHING FOR ALL'

A Jesuit high school in Montreal goes co-ed

Sarah Vincent

IDEAS IN REVIEW

50

NICK CAVE AND THE ART OF SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

For hundreds of thousands of fans, Nick Cave has become a pastor of sorts

Kaya Oakes

BOOKS

The Agitators; Man of Dialogue; Winning and Losing the Nuclear Peace; The Great Dissenter

The 2022 Foley contest: Poetry that speaks the unspeakable

Joe Hoover

POEM

55

IN COPENHAGEN

Lisa Mullenneaux

The 2022 Foley Award winner

THE WORD

64

A reflection for June

Jaime L. Waters

LAST TAKE

66

WILLIAM A. WACK

Has the church lost its evangelical zeal?

Is there a better way to pray the Our Father?

Nathan Schneider, in his article “Have Catholics been praying the Our Father all wrong?” (May 2022), examines the ways in which believers of all stripes—Catholics, Protestants, Christian Scientists and even deists—have re-examined and reinterpreted the language of the Lord’s Prayer for devotional purposes. Attempts to personalize the prayer’s text are not impious, Schneider writes; instead, these efforts should be recognized for the way they “represent a lineage and a genre, a longstanding urge.” **America’s** readers responded with their own thoughts about tailoring the prayer that Jesus taught us.

I have spent a lifetime rewording the lines of this “how-to” prayer, and finally realize that it is somewhat like a song-sheet: What you do with it is reproduce it in a living voice, with mind- and heart-grace notes and flat notes, aria-like and wordlessly.... It is “how to pray,” not “what to pray.” For years, it has been my bedtime falling-asleep prayer. I never get to the end any more.

Joris Heise

As a woman, I find the Our *Father* painful to say. I try to change the language as much as possible. Also, the words *kingdom*, *power* and *glory* represent, for me, masculine qualities that I’m not much interested in. I love that a kind man from my meditation group out of Ireland has changed that to “Yours is the kingdom of love, yours is a powerful love, yours is a glorious love.” God cannot be male only.

Kathleen Simar

← Gender is a gift that language often bestows on inanimate objects and nouns of all types. Jesus was crucified for the “sacrilege” of being a child of God, and his human gender (unquestionably male) did not matter. No doubt Jesus wanted to encourage us to be brothers and sisters and was not limiting God to masculine qualities.

Eugene Devany

I feel no need to paraphrase. The meaning of each traditional phrase is clear. Every time I pray, I feel myself resisting what is asked of me. “Thy will be done....” No, I want my will to be done. “As we forgive....” No, there are some people I am not prepared to forgive. Yet I say the words. This ambiguity is where I live. I need to be reminded of that every day.

Arthur Menu

Several years ago, my wife and I attended a Mass at St. Francis on the White Mountain Apache reservation. It was

there that I was first introduced to the idea of making the Our Father a personal communication. Instead of the Our Father, the priest began with the Apache word for “Our Father-Mother,” and so on. His sensitivity to the Apache congregation guided the way he helped them to pray in a way that was meaningful to them. I took that as permission to do the same.

Ray Miller

As a Jesuit educated person, the one line that always gave me a problem was “lead us not into temptation.” Well, *duh!* God would not lead us to temptation. I always felt it should be more like, “help us to avoid temptation.” And then, wouldn’t you know, along comes the first Jesuit pope, and he had similar thoughts.

Steve Janowski

Neil Douglas-Klotz has written books on how very different Aramaic is from the Greek that is used in the New Testament text, from which our English translations are made. For example, The Lord’s prayer begins with “Our Father,” a translation of the word *abba*. But the actual Aramaic transliteration is *Abwoon* which is a blending of *abba* (“father”) and *woon* (“womb”)—Jesus’ recognition of the masculine and feminine source of creation.

Sally Forth

My Protestant grandmother told me how the ending “For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever” gave her great solace, and she’d say it over and over. The kingdom, including our wealth and glory, including our prestige and pride.... These are all God’s, so don’t put stock in them being ours.

Lynn Vincentnathan



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Roe v. Wade: An End and a Beginning

In early May, a leaked draft of a majority opinion in the *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health* case, now before the Supreme Court, indicated that the court was on the verge of overturning its precedents in *Roe v. Wade* and *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*. The Supreme Court confirmed that the leak was an authentic draft, dating from February. While it is not clear how closely the final ruling, expected sometime in late June or early July, will resemble the draft, at least two conclusions can be drawn.

First, the Mississippi law at issue in *Dobbs*, which bans abortion after 15 weeks of gestation, is almost certain to be upheld. And unless Chief Justice John Roberts convinces another conservative justice to join him in a more limited decision, it seemingly will be upheld by overturning *Roe* and *Casey* entirely. Second, both the unprecedented leak itself and the ensuing furor over the potential decision—which has, at press time, already included protest marches, vandalism and arson of a pro-life group's headquarters, and angry demonstrations outside the homes of Supreme Court justices who are expected to sign on to the opinion—demonstrate that nearly 50 years of trying to resolve abortion policy at the Supreme Court has been an abject failure that has contributed to thoroughly politicizing the court.

The question that remains, then, is this: What is the right path forward from this point, with regard to both the substantive question of abortion policy and the political discourse around the issue?

The editors of **America** have long argued that as a constitutional matter abortion is properly a question for state legislatures. Further, as

a moral matter, unborn human life is deserving of legal protection through restrictions on abortion, which must be accompanied by protections for pregnant women and support to make it possible to welcome a child in economic security. For both of those reasons, we welcome the prospect of *Roe* being overturned and better abortion laws being made possible. We continue to call on our allies and colleagues in the pro-life movement to work for social safety net policies that can help reduce the incidence of abortion. A failure to do so while lobbying for increasingly severe abortion restrictions will harden hearts and minds against recognizing the moral duty to protect unborn life.

We have also long believed that, pragmatically, *Roe* and *Casey* have led to more deeply entrenched divisions over abortion. Rather than cooperation and compromise, these court decisions have incentivized pro-choice advocates to oppose any and every substantive restriction on abortion all the way to the Supreme Court. We do not see a realistic possibility that such incentives can change as long as the constitutionality of any abortion law turns on how at least five justices apply *Casey's* vague "undue burden" standard. That means that the best hope—albeit a narrow one—for better political discourse on abortion remains removing the obstacles of *Roe* and *Casey* and returning the issue to the normal order of legislative politics.

Even if Chief Justice Roberts were to succeed in securing a more limited ruling upholding a 15-week limit on abortion while deciding nothing else, the question of abortion would be back before the court in short order. Other states could

propose laws banning abortion after 10 or 12 weeks, or a challenge to the private enforcement of the six-week Texas ban could finally make it to the court in a way that cannot be dodged. And if that next case pares down *Roe* and *Casey* a bit more without overruling them, there will be another case after that. Endless repetition of the same process will not produce a stable resolution to this question.

The U.S. public has remained deeply divided over abortion for decades, and both political parties have become expert at exploiting that division for partisan ends. While overturning *Roe* and *Casey* will not end that partisanship, as long as abortion policy can only be meaningfully affected by nominations to the court, abortion will remain a wedge issue dominating politics.

For these same reasons, we believe that the pro-life movement should not pursue the constitutional recognition of fetal personhood through the courts as a way to unilaterally restrict and criminalize abortion. Since the Constitution is as silent on this matter as it is on abortion, a court ruling establishing fetal personhood would be the mirror image of *Roe's* fundamental error, likely locking the country into a proxy war over the issue through judicial nominations.

The stance of the Catholic Church against abortion derives from a commitment to the sacredness of every human life regardless of circumstances, in the womb or outside of it. To protect life everywhere else but to deny such protection to the unborn is to participate in what Daniel Berrigan, S.J., once denounced as "a human horror," in which the lives of the unborn are considered among

those that do not deserve rights and dignity. “Civilized people,” said Father Berrigan, “have no business disposing of life at whatever stage.”

The Catholic Church teaches that the embryo, as human life, “must be treated from conception as a person” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, No. 2274). This is a moral argument, which implicitly acknowledges that there is no objective way to identify a moment in human development at which the moral actors can be confident that a less-developed human being is not yet a person and so may freely be killed. Catholics are called to convince our fellow citizens of the shared duty to protect human life through argument and democratic activism and should not seek to impose it by judicial fiats, which rely on inevitably strained constitutional arguments.

What is most needed in the public debate on abortion is an honest moral reckoning with the two goods that are in tension when a woman faces a pregnancy she feels she cannot continue: her bodily integrity and personal autonomy, and the dignity of the unborn life that is entirely dependent on her. Under the incentives Roe helped establish, advocates for one good tend to ignore or elide the other, while vilifying opponents who are doing the same. Enmity and fear of people on the other side of the abortion issue will not be easy to overcome. But the call to love and do justice both to women and to the lives of the unborn demands nothing less.

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The church can help prevent violence—by doing a better job teaching about sex

There is an assumption that gets in the way of sexual violence prevention: that talking about things like sexual activity and consent somehow encourages sexual activity. So schools and churches, as well as families, often shy away from teaching about the sexual abuse of children and, later, about the sexual assault of adults.

The debate about which topics are age-appropriate and how to introduce youth to sensitive subjects is born of a shared desire to protect children. But fears of “indoctrination” or introducing sensitive topics to students too early can keep needed sexual education out of schools altogether, ultimately leading to harm. Eliminating certain topics from the curriculum altogether also harms adults. Many adult survivors of sexual assault—nearly a third of whom first experienced assault between the ages of 11 and 17—say they received prevention education too late or never received it at all.

Violence prevention research recommends education that is “upstream” (that is, addressing the root causes of violence) and holistic (delivered by multiple messengers in multiple community settings). According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, effective prevention education teaches not only individual safety measures (carry mace or use the buddy system) but also the characteristics of a person, family or environment that make a person more likely to perpetrate violence. The C.D.C. calls these risk factors, and they include a tolerance of sexual violence and societal norms of male superiority and female inferiority that are present in a neighborhood or other kind of community.

Research suggests that churches

can be highly effective in providing holistic education. They have a well-defined audience with shared values; and because churches have contact with entire families, they can use prevention strategies that are appropriate for each age group.

Strategies for sexual violence prevention for young children, for example, include curricula that teach healthy boundaries. Far from encouraging sexual activity, these curricula specifically teach children that they have the agency to say no to physical contact. And for Catholic school teachers who want help delivering these lessons, local violence prevention organizations will often lead sessions for free.

As students begin dating relationships, effective prevention strategies should include conversations about consent. The curriculum *Safe Dates* is one example of the kind of content teachers could cover with students. It challenges the societal norm that men are dominant and women are submissive, a norm that leads men to treat women as objects of desire. Bystander intervention training is another prevention strategy that offers age-appropriate content. This training teaches participants how to overcome personal barriers—such as having a nonconfrontational personality or worrying about safety—so they can intervene in potentially violent situations.

Because the most successful education campaigns are often local, Pope Francis, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and other leaders could provide templates but also encourage campaigns that are parish-centered. Homilies can also reiterate church teachings: that, as the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches, sexual

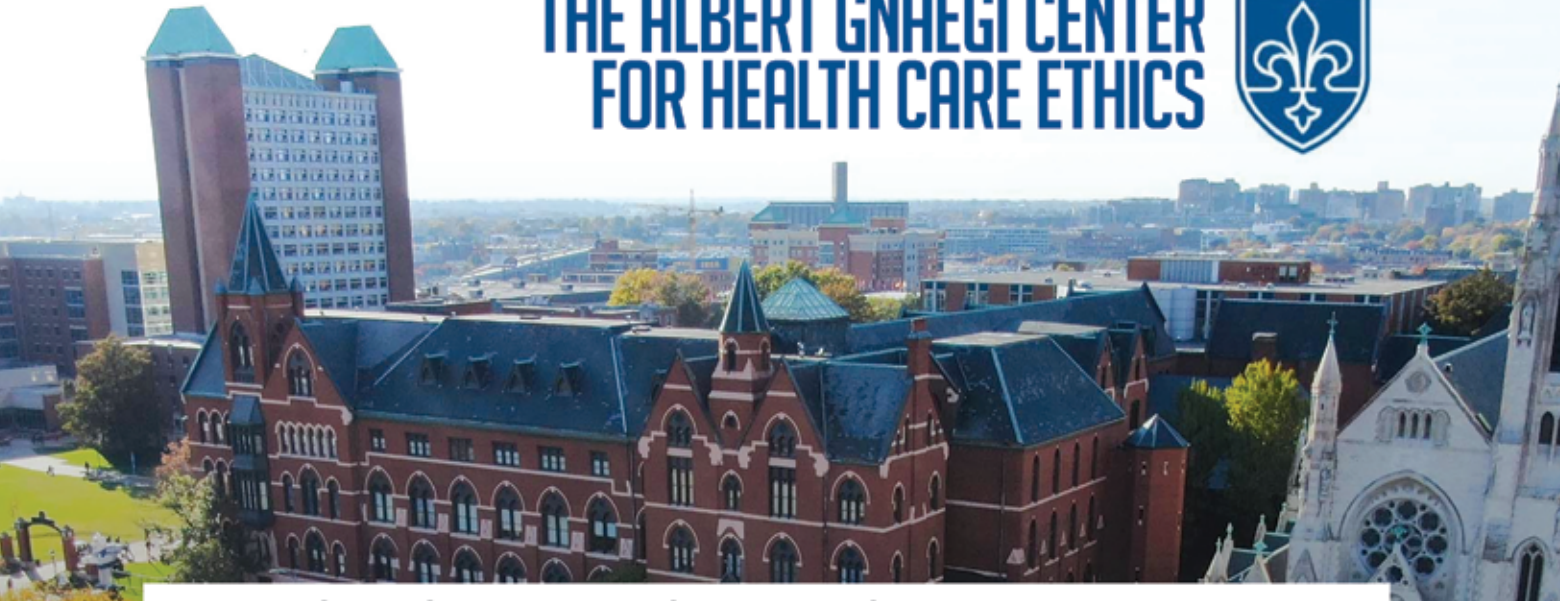
assault is the fault of the perpetrator rather than the survivor; that the parable of the good Samaritan is a story of bystander intervention; and that, when Jesus condemned looking at women with lust, he also condemned their exploitation and objectification. (The Archdiocese of Chicago is especially supportive of violence prevention efforts, and its Domestic Violence Outreach site includes videos of several relevant homilies.)

Parishes and faith-based organizations can also help prevent sexual violence by joining community coalitions that include businesses, schools and military installations. At a nonprofit for which I once worked, the local parish was an active member of our coalition. The priest, soup kitchen director and other staff posted resources at the church entrance, including a flier with examples of bystander intervention. Catechism teachers used the annual Safe Environment training, an abuse prevention program for employees and volunteers who have contact with minors and vulnerable adults, to have a discussion with youth about physical, emotional and behavioral boundaries.

Sexual violence is a topic that educators should handle with care, but the desire to avoid discomfort should not come at the expense of safety. Children are never too young to learn about boundaries or bystander intervention. We owe them the knowledge and the tools to protect themselves and others from sexual violence.

Shelby Kearns is a culture writer who uses her training in victims services and violence prevention theory to develop communication for nonprofit organizations.

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In a First, Fordham Will be Led by a Woman, Not a Catholic Priest



Santa Clara University announces history-making new president

Is a Catholic university still Catholic when its priests, brothers and sisters are gone?

By Michael O'Loughlin



Rockhurst names first woman, lay president succeed Curran

First it was Fordham University in New York. Two weeks later, a similar announcement was made at Rockhurst University in Missouri. The next day, Santa Clara University in California followed suit. Within a matter of weeks, three Jesuit institutions announced they would soon be led for the first time by laypeople rather than priests or brothers.

The frequency of such announcements from Catholic colleges and universities originally founded by religious orders can make it feel as if the transition to lay leadership is something sudden. But the changes are actually part of an accelerating trend in recent decades, with top university or college leadership posts being handed over to lay professionals. As the number of priests and consecrated women and men available for ministry at institutions of higher education continues to decline, religious orders seek out models that ensure their respective missions and charisms will continue. Still, questions remain about how the empowerment of lay leaders might affect a school's Catholic identity.

"I think we're in a period of experimentation right now," Dennis Holtschneider, C.M., head of the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities, told *America*. "This is more than just the downsizing of religious orders. This is at the same time a major shift in how people are identifying with religion, especially among the younger generation."

According to the association, 79 percent of its 188 member institutions, or 149 colleges and universities, are currently headed by a layperson, with more on the horizon.

The number of priests, brothers and sisters in religious orders in the United States has diminished considerably in recent decades. In 1970, according to the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, there were 33,543 priests and brothers in religious orders, but that number was down to 14,541 by 2021. The trend holds for women in religious life as well. There were 160,931 women in religious orders in 1970, compared with 39,452 last year. That decline marks a 75.5 percent drop in membership over a 50-year period for women religious and a 56.7 percent drop for their male counterparts.

Presidents-elect of Jesuit universities. Top (left to right): Tania Tetlow, J.D., Fordham University; Julie Sullivan, Ph.D., Santa Clara University. Bottom: Sandra Cassady, Ph.D., Rockhurst University.

Composite by America Media.
CNS Photo Patrick Ryan, Fordham University; CNS photo/Mark Brown, University of St. Thomas; Rockhurst University

So for decades, various religious orders have provided training opportunities for lay administrators, faculty and staff, who then help students understand the church's intellectual tradition and the unique charism of the order under whose auspices their institutions are run.

Twenty years ago, the Sisters of Mercy recognized the declining number of sisters available to minister on its campuses and created the Conference for Mercy Higher Education, part of an effort "to reinforce the bonds of Mercy traditions and to strengthen the Catholic identity and Mercy charism at all colleges and universities." The goal of the organization is to help its 17 colleges and universities live out the ideals of the Sisters of Mercy, using a peer review mechanism similar to an accreditation process.

The process is designed not as a punitive checkup, but as an opportunity for "affirmation, assessment, support and the celebration of the work at the institution in terms of the Mercy Catholic mission," Julia Cavallo, the executive director of the conference, told **America**. The conference augments the self-assessments the schools undertake and helps institutions focus on characteristics important to the Mercy Sisters, such as hospitality, compassion and a holistic approach to education.

Like many other networks of Catholic colleges and universities, schools associated with the Mercy Sisters are aware that many of their students do not always have strong ties to religious faith. Younger Americans are significantly more likely not to belong to a faith community than are any other age group.

In addition to professional development opportunities for faculty and staff, the Conference for Mercy Higher Education hosts events for students, such as social-justice advocacy days. And even though many students will never interact with a Sister of Mercy, Dr. Cavallo said the sisters see their lay collaborators as the ones who will continue their mission.

"Many Sisters of Mercy will say to me, 'You are Mercy now,'" she said.

For the nation's Jesuit colleges and universities, a similar process of examining an institution's Catholic identity is available through the Mission Priority Examen. The

process is based on a brief daily prayer popular among individuals formed by the spirituality of St. Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits, in which one reviews the day, looking for signs of God's presence.

According to the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities, which represents 28 member institutions—at least 23 of which will be led by laypeople beginning next academic year—Jesuit education is marked by "a restlessness that fuels the search for knowledge, meaning, and the reality of God." The process of examining an institution's Catholic and Jesuit identity includes self-assessment, visits from leaders at peer institutions and consultations with Jesuit leaders.

A 41-page document explores themes that mark Jesuit higher education; these include the pursuit of faith, justice and reconciliation, promoting an Ignatian campus culture, service to the church and commitment to mission.

Though several national networks exist to help schools foster their Catholic identity, individual institutions are also adding staff to explore questions about what it means to be a faith-based university today. Father Holtschneider said the vast majority of Catholic colleges and universities in the United States turn to mission officers as a resource to look at how the founding ethos of a school is lived out in contemporary times.

"That's a really big deal," he said. "These positions didn't exist a generation ago and now all of these schools have created a position whose principal job is to worry and think about: How is this corporate culture vibrant and alive here? How do we know we're doing the work? How are we measuring the work? Are we doing best practices?"

At Edgewood College in Madison, Wis., Milton Javier Bravo seeks to help his colleagues integrate into all of campus life the spirit of the Dominican Sisters of Sinsinawa, who founded the institution in 1927. Today, the sisters are no longer on the faculty or part of the administration, though some keep a presence on campus through other work.

As the school's first vice president for mission, values and inclusion, Dr. Bravo sees his job as helping the faculty, the staff and the students live the mission of the institution.

"What does it mean to work with faculty to center justice, antiracism and culturally responsive education? What does it mean to center, for the whole college, a culturally responsive ministry? What does it mean to be an inclusive college environment that is welcoming and serving of all students, particularly historically underrepresented students?" Dr. Bravo asked, adding that those questions are considered an "expression of the mission

and Dominican Catholic identity of the institution.”

In addition to offering Mass, providing opportunities for service and displaying culturally diverse representations of Catholicism, colleges and universities like Edgewood devote time during the academic year to remember the values of their founders and give students the opportunity to apply them in today’s context. Dr. Bravo said he looks to the Dominican Sisters of Sinsinawa for their continued advocacy on social-justice issues like immigration, health care and education as inspiration for helping Edgewood live out its spiritual ethos.

Understanding how the tradition of the sisters’ ministry fuels their advocacy can help faculty and staff at the college implement those values into teaching and program-

ming, Dr. Bravo said.

As lay professionals increasingly responsible for maintaining a school’s Catholic identity, some people say it is too soon to tell how effective these bodies and measures will be.

“The jury’s out,” Father Holtschneider said. “But there’s a lot of activity and a lot of creativity, and people are trying to find their way.”

Michael O’Loughlin, *national correspondent*.
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Sarah Vincent and Doug Girardot, Joseph A. O’Hare fellows, contributed to the reporting of this story.

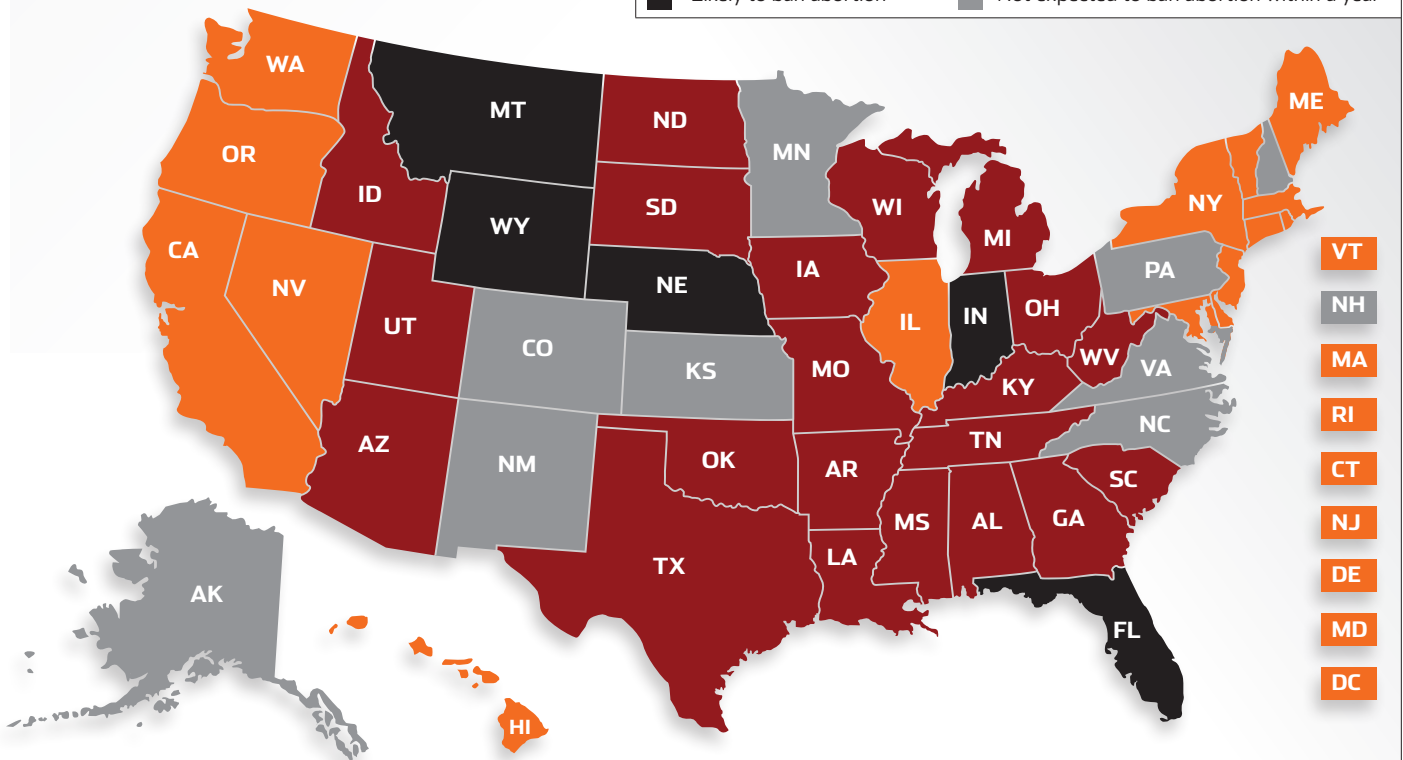
AFTER ROE, THE DIVIDED STATES OF AMERICA

Twenty-six states are certain or likely to ban abortion if the U.S. Supreme Court overturns *Roe v. Wade* as expected in a decision that could be handed down this month, including 13 with trigger laws that would go into effect immediately when the ruling is published. According to the Guttmacher

Institute, a pro-choice research and policy institute, laws and constitutions in 15 other states and the District of Columbia would protect abortion rights. The emerging divide suggests a new era of post-*Roe* “abortion tourism.”

State action if *Roe v. Wade* is overturned:

■ Certain to ban abortion	■ Law/constitution protects abortion rights
■ Likely to ban abortion	■ Not expected to ban abortion within a year



Source: The Guttmacher Institute.

Civil liberties are the latest casualties in El Salvador's war against gangs

A three-day weekend of extreme gang violence in El Salvador, from March 25 to March 27, ended with 87 people dead. The government of President Nayib Bukele responded by declaring a state of emergency on March 27, suspending various civil liberties and expanding the armed forces' enforcement powers. That 30-day decree was extended by the Salvadoran Legislative Assembly on April 24. On April 5, the assembly approved reforms to the Criminal Code that will punish anyone who "reproduces or transmits messages from gangs" with a possible prison term of 10 to 15 years.

In a sign of the uncertainty that the new laws were creating around free expression, a source from Servicio Social Pasionista, a human rights organization affiliated with the Catholic Church in El Salvador, asked to be quoted anonymously in order to discuss the government's moves. This source said the state of emergency stigmatizes men who are poor and young, cutting off the possibility of less repressive interventions against gang violence. "Right now, the last thing you can talk about is social reinsertion and rehabilitation [of gang offenders]," the source said. "The government's actions go hand in hand with [political rhetoric] full of hatred, encouraging the cruel treatment of those being arrested."

The source believes the latest move from the Bukele government is intended to silence journalists who are speaking out against human rights abuses. "These reforms will lead to the criminalization of journalists and those who report on the government's negotiations with gangs," the source said.

Danilo Flores, director of the Human Rights Observatory at the University of Central America, a Jesuit university in El Salvador, charges that Mr. Bukele has used security worries to concentrate power in his office, violating human rights and eroding democracy, but has so far suffered no political consequences. He enjoys high approval ratings from a Salvadoran public exhausted by crime. Mr. Flores believes the emergency declaration has escalated this trend toward public acceptance of more authoritarian control.

An estimated 70,000 gang members control streets and communities across the country. Gangs gain most of



Heavily armed police guard the streets in downtown San Salvador, El Salvador, on March 27.

AP Photo/Salvador Melendez

their income from extortion, especially in communities where they have become the de facto rulers. They are responsible for much of the homicidal violence in the country, force internal and external migration, and engage in drug trafficking and other illicit activities.

"Gangs hold the real power in the territory. Nothing happens without their backing," said Jeannette Aguilar, a Salvadoran security expert. "The only way to compete with the gang's control of the territory is with economic opportunities, with real state presence, with social investment, with inclusion alternatives for youth, and with a long-term and measurable security strategy."

An article in the journal *Social Problems* in February reported that 60 percent of active gang members in El Salvador want to leave their gangs. Many gang members say joining a church provides an exit that gang leaders will accept. That finding suggests that faith communities could play an important role in tackling the gang problem.

José Miguel Cruz, a gang expert and co-author of the study, believes the government has missed an opportunity to use its political capital to transform El Salvador's approach to gangs, instead relying on repressive tactics that have failed in the past. According to Mr. Cruz, when young people leave a gang because they have joined a church, gang leaders monitor them to see if the conversion is genuine and check for visible practices. These are more common and easier to track in evangelical churches, which might explain why there has been less acceptance from gang leaders when members claim they wish to break away to become closer to the Catholic Church.

Dany Díaz Mejía contributes from Honduras. Twitter: @ddiazmejia.

GOODNEWS: Palm Sunday with the ‘crucified church’ of Belize



The 33 mission churches of Toledo District in southern Belize, and the roughly 10,000 Catholics they serve, share a single priest, Sam Wilson, S.J. This year, on Palm Sunday, he was on his way to celebrate Mass in “the last village on the map,” as he calls it, a hamlet of about 34 families named Machakilha, deep in Mayan territory along the Belize border with Guatemala.

The villages Father Sam pastors, mostly Q’eqchi’ Maya and a few Mopan communities, are nearly all off the grid—no electricity or internet, no doctors and no paved roads. From Toledo’s main town of Punta Gorda, where Father Sam is based, it is three and a half hours of off-roading, then another 45 minutes of hiking through the jungle to reach Machakilha.

When we finally reach Machakilha, the entire population of the village—plus visitors from several neighboring communities—has crammed into and around the simple church, singing hymns and offering prayers led by lay catechists. The congregation moves to the river on the outer edge of the village, where the Palm Sunday procession will start. Here we do not have to “import” our palm fronds. A few men are still chopping and distributing palm branches from adjacent trees.

The church here is led by laypeople and always has been, as priests in Belize are not able to visit rural churches more than a handful of times a year. Up until about 25 years ago, there were no roads, and Jesuits visited the mis-

sion stations entirely on foot and by boat, traveling the circuit of villages over the course of a few months. This system worked well for a long time, but as roads improved, an unanticipated challenge arrived: evangelical Protestant missionaries from the United States.

Sister Esther Paau, an always smiling Pallottine missionary sister who works with Father Sam, explains that when she was growing up, her village was entirely Catholic. But one day a vanload of evangelical missionaries turned up preaching a vehemently anti-Catholic message, and soon more and more villagers were converting to Protestantism. Today, Catholics are unwelcome in her village and in several others.

While the Toledo District missions have many excellent catechist leaders, it is still challenging to compete with Protestants who pressure Catholics to convert. Father Sam says they ask his catechists: “Why should you only get to see your pastor a few times a year? Join our church and you’ll be your own pastor.”

In his Palm Sunday homily, Father Sam preaches on the Cross—“the greatest act of love God has ever done, ever.” He reminds his flock that in the Gospels, Jesus was rejected by his own people, ignored, called names, made fun of. And that each time these things happen to us, “He understands and knows what we go through. He is with us.”

It is as if he is preaching about them; Father Sam calls his flock the “crucified church” of Toledo—powerless, ig-



Photo by Jeremy Zipple, S.J.

Sam Wilson, S.J., celebrates Mass on Palm Sunday with the people of Machakilha, deep in Mayan territory along the Belize border with Guatemala.



Cutting turf in Maumturk Mountains near Cong, Ireland

While Europe struggles to end Russian energy imports, a turf battle emerges in Ireland

In Ireland, the summertime practice of cutting turf from local boglands is a culturally significant exercise. The arduous task involves cutting sods of peat from the bog using a specialized spade, then drying the sods and transporting them home.

Turf-burning generates more carbon emissions than even coal while creating less heat, and the particulates thrown into the air make turf-burning especially hazardous. But despite its clear drawbacks, a recent attempt to ban turf-burning demonstrated how much affection rural Ireland retains for the boggy fuel.

Public backlash to a proposed ban prompted a speedy modification. The revised policy not only protects the right of families to cut peat from their own bogs but also allows small-scale trading of turf with neighbors to continue. The broad rejection of the ban may be an expression of a rural backlash against a Dublin political culture that is perceived to be driven primarily by urban concerns, without a proper appreciation of the life in traditional Irish farming communities.

Opposition parties were delighted to criticize the government's attempt to outlaw an affordable source of home heat as the prices of oil and gas climb higher. Ireland's turf battle reached a climax on April 27, when the coalition government, including the traditional powerhouses Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael along with the Green Party, defeated an opposition move to completely overturn the turf ban, but only after making a commitment to halt its implementation until at least next year.

With Russian forces' territorial ambitions in Ukraine wreaking havoc with energy supplies across Continental Europe, Ireland's turf war demonstrates that as much as contemporary Irish society may revel in its progressive international reputation, parochial issues still have the capacity to dominate the local political process.

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nored, voiceless, struggling to eke out daily survival.

When I spend time in this parish, I cannot help but ponder how dramatically Pope Francis' ecclesial project of moving the church to its peripheries would transform the global church if we let it. I cannot help wondering how different global Catholicism might look if these subsistence farmer-catechists, rather than we in wealthy societies, were setting the agenda.

Despite many challenges, the faith remains strong here, and Father Sam's parishioners are forever asking him for more—more sacraments, more retreats, more faith formation. The Palm Sunday trip to Machakilha requires a total of 12 hours travel: That's 12 hours for a single Mass in a single village as 32 other villages go without the Eucharist this Palm Sunday.

Father Sam's prayer is that more of his brother Jesuits will answer the call to serve in assignments on the peripheries like southern Belize. "It's where we should be," he says.

Jeremy Zipple, S.J., is associate pastor of St. Martin de Porres Catholic Church in Belize City and a former executive editor of America Media.
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T R A N S F O R M I N G

Health Care

for minorities and the poor

BY MARIO J. PAREDES

It bears repeating that the COVID-19 pandemic laid bare in stark relief the still significant gap separating the quality of health care enjoyed by white and affluent American from that made available to minorities and the poor.

As all of you know, the figures are startling. At the height of the pandemic, research showed that Hispanics made up 29 percent of the population in New York City but suffered 34 percent of all deaths from COVID-19 African Americans made up 22 percent of the population and suffered 28 percent of deaths. White Americans made up 32 percent of New York City's population but had 27 percent of deaths. Other minorities also suffered disproportionately during the pandemic.

Underlying this morbidity and mortality were the primary medical conditions—diabetes, obesity, hypertension, cardiovascular disease—that made minorities far more vulnerable to the virus. In still far too many cases these conditions among poor minorities with no or poor health insurance go undetected and untreated, or they are treated with insufficient care or consistency. Such is the harsh reality of inequities in health care affecting racial and ethnic minority communities in the US, with the poorest among them suffering the brunt of the neglect and discrimination.

Many argue that this lack of equitable access to health care can be argely blamed on structural racism of US health care policy, which

shapes the many ways in which health care in the US is structured to give benefits to the white population at the expense of racial and ethnic minority populations. Thus, racism is built into the system. And in many ways, of course, it definitely is. Significant fall-out of the biased system is found in the realm of health insurance. Research has shown that racial identity is linked to a lack of health insurance, while low-income minorities suffering poor health are almost 70 percent more likely to have no health insurance than affluent whites who are in good health.

Also, those racial and ethnic minorities that do have insurance are disproportionately covered by employers whose plans offer relatively poor coverage. Many of these employees are not eligible for Medicaid, nor for federal subsidies through the Affordable Care Act. They are stuck with subpar health insurance and potentially large out of pocket expenses in the case of significant illness.

For example, whereas the average family spends about \$8,000 or 10 percent of the annual income on health insurance premiums, for African Americans that figure stands at almost 20 percent of annual household income—a huge difference considering income disparity. High costs lead many minority families to remain underinsured. Of the nation's 87 million underinsured people, 18 percent are African American.

Today, discrimination on the basis of race or ethnicity is illegal, but nefarious practices continue in the form of hospitals and other medical institutions discriminating against patients based on insurance status, a practice which disproportionately affects non-white communities.

Plus, across the board, studies find that, compared to whites, Hispanic and black patients are less likely to be given evidence-based cardiovascular care, kidney transplants, age-appropriate screening for breast and colon cancer, timely treatment for cancer and stroke, treatment for reported pain, preventive care across the board, as well as effective and appropriate mental health care. The system seems rigged!

This is hard to believe, but as recently as 2016 a study found that many white medical students believed that black people have a higher tolerance for pain than white people, under the assumption that blacks have thicker skin, less sensitive nerve endings or stronger immune systems. Such shocking beliefs go back to the nineteenth century, with roots in the mistreatment of African slaves. A whopping 73 percent of medical students surveyed reported at least one erroneous belief regarding biological differences between races. Clearly, in our society, the perception of racial and ethnic minorities still labels them as unwanted outsiders. We must all join forces to bring about genuine, lasting health care reform.

For many of us the battle will take place in the health care establishment, others will advocate in the political arena, still others, through communication efforts, will aim for engaging the public in the cause to eradicate racial and ethnic discrimination in US health care.

For SOMOS Community Care, a network of 2,500 community-based doctors providing minorities and the poor in New York City with superior health care, while active in all these various arenas, the primary focus has been to improve the quality of publicly funded health care for the poor: Medicaid reform. Our experience shows that hard work, dedication, and smart spending can offer the neediest patients—with racial and ethnic minorities disproportionately represented—excellent, life-changing health care.

SOMOS got its start in 2014 thanks to an innovative Medicaid program launched by the New York State Department of Health, called the Delivery System Reform Incentive Payment program. DSRIP has demonstrated the viability of upending traditional Medicaid by offering patients superior care, including preventive care at lower cost—the best of both worlds.

First, traditional Medicaid is not very patient-friendly. Seeking care, recipients often find themselves in a maze, with lots of red tape, difficulty making appointments and much waiting time. This model does not produce careful oversight and coordination of a patient's overall medical and behavioral care. SOMOS is offering patients a one-stop portal to access all the care needed, with the primary care doctor overseeing and carefully recording data on patients' overall care.

This model presumes a dedicated physician. That dedication is rewarded by the core formula of DSRIP: Value-Based Payment (VBP). Traditional Medicaid—prone to waste and fraud—pays doctors for discrete procedures, services rendered, an office visit, a test, etc. The Value-based Payment formula stipulates doctors are compensated according to the longer-term health outcomes of patients; the better the patients do, the greater the compensation for the provider. Hence, the cultivation, the construction of a holistic, comprehensive plan of

action that takes into account all the needs of a patient.

Among those needs, beyond the strictly medical, are those dictated by social factors, such as poverty, unemployment, sub-par housing, etc. These are known as Social Determinants of Health and they are a key indicator as to the needs and challenges of patients, especially for the most vulnerable among them. SOMOS doctors rely on teams of Community Health Workers, who visit patients' homes and are doctors' eyes and ears in the community. Traditional Medicaid often provided through hospital-based corporate medical entities is simply not able to flag social issues in the lives of patients.

The 2,500 SOMOS doctors (most of them primary care doctors)—serving more than 700,000 African Americans, Asian Americans, and Hispanic Americans in New York City—also have a cultural and ethnic affinity with their patients, in whose very neighborhoods they themselves live and work in many cases.

In sum, with doctors having intimate knowledge of their patients' lives, a genuine doctor-patient bond of trust is created—which holds the key to treatment success. Testimony to that success? Savings for New York State taxpayers of more than \$300M thanks to SOMOS doctors reducing by 25 percent unnecessary trips to the ER and unnecessary hospitalizations.

The end of the five-year DSRIP mandate coincided with the start of the pandemic. SOMOS again focused on poor minorities by setting up and running testing sites at schools as well as at neighborhood churches, catering to an underserved population.

SOMOS did the same when it got the go-ahead to administer the vaccine at neighborhood-based doctor's practices, thus again helping underserved minorities who were hard-pressed to make appointments on often confusing websites. As trusted figures, much like the family doctors of old, SOMOS doctors are also able to help overcome patients' doubts and concerns about getting vaccinated.

SOMOS doctors are reaping the rewards of their hard work, as patients flourish thanks to excellent care. Smart spending holds the key to DSRIP and SOMOS has high hopes that there will soon be a DSRIP 2.0 to continue to transform health care for poor minority communities. It can be done and the SOMOS model can be replicated elsewhere in New York State or even nationally. Significant savings and magnificent results are a great incentive.

In the end, what must drive us in combating racial and ethnic discrimination in health care is what Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia, president of the Pontifical Academy for Life, in a recent talk at SOMOS headquarters, described as the Church's social doctrine, which gives "a central place to the human person and human dignity, and to the goal of relationships based on solidarity and justice."

Mario J. Paredes is CEO of SOMOS Community Care, a network of 2,600 independent physicians—most of them primary care providers—serving close to a million of New York City's most vulnerable Medicaid patients.



THE HIGH COST OF MOTHERHOOD

When a woman becomes a mother, there is almost no limit to what the role will demand

By Rachel Lu

For many Catholic adults who oppose abortion today, the pro-life movement was our real introduction to moral philosophy. Maybe we attended prayer vigils with our families in grade school or high school, or maybe we just read news magazines and argued with kids on the school bus. Either way, the questions surrounding abortion opened our minds to some fundamental moral questions. What do people owe to one another? What is a human life, and what is it worth? When must we set aside our personal goals for the sake of something bigger? I can still remember sitting in seventh-grade Spanish class, turning over the phrases in my head: “right to life,” “unique human being,” “woman’s right to choose.”

Even as it shaped our moral sensibilities, the pro-life movement also served for many of us as a kind of primer for politics in the United States. We may have come of age with a deep antagonism toward the American judiciary, but at the same time, we also had serious reasons to reflect on the value of civic peace. We reflected on the ethical and pragmatic rea-





sons for pursuing worthy goals within the constraints of our political system. We talked a lot in the '90s and 2000s about “the culture of death,” and also debated what might be involved in building a culture of life.

For many years now, the prospect of overturning *Roe v. Wade* has unified pro-life Americans. We had our disagreements, but in a strange way, our shared opposition to this Supreme Court verdict provided the canopy for a very large political tent. But the recent leak to Politico of a draft majority opinion written by Justice Samuel Alito suggests that the Supreme Court will soon strike down *Roe v. Wade*, and a corner may finally be turned. We must consider the road ahead. It is a strange moment.

If *Roe* is overturned, pro-life Catholics likely will rejoice, but we also must consider the ways in which the political landscape more broadly, as well as the dynamics among the various factions of the pro-life movement, may change as a result. It may feel harder to work together in pursuit of honorable goals. Nevertheless, we can. It is possible because the groundwork has already been laid.

Across all those years of praying for the right judges, we understood that originalist legal theories could not really do all the work. Strong legal protections for the unborn would be impossible without the support of a given state's voters. Even with amenable voters, laws can only do so much. The state can and should provide some protections for unborn children, but a culture of life must go further. Children have enormous needs that cannot be met by laws. They need families. Most especially, they need parents.

The Face of Motherhood

The first eyes to meet a newborn's gaze should normally be those of the infant's mother. She is the person whose voice a child has heard for months on end. Her body was the child's original home. Sometimes there are serious reasons why a mother cannot nurture her child, but in a culture of life, we would normally expect those eyes to be there, searching the tiny face, making first contact with the world's newest citizen. No law can make this happen, but it needs to happen, at least

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It will take much more than a strong social safety net to end abortion in America.

in most cases, if we truly want to protect and support our children. What this means, of course, is that a pro-life society must support mothers. They are indispensable to the good of children, and to society as a whole.

What does this mean on a cultural level? This is a terribly difficult question, not least because it plunges us into broader controversies about the status of women generally. Historically, many or most societies have presumed that a woman's primary responsibilities were to her household and children. Her civic status was generally mediated through her husband, her father or another familial male.

As a somewhat natural but unfortunate extension of this principle, most societies have treated women as something less than full-fledged citizens. In many places, until recently they were a protected class, with only some of the rights and duties that define citizens. In the United States today, we consider that sort of arrangement to be unacceptable. Women do deserve to be citizens, with full access to civic society. As a woman, I am grateful that we have taken this laudable step, affirming the full dignity of women. Still, it remains undeniably difficult today to give women the moral and material support they need to be present for their children while also ensuring the opportunity to pursue outside work (whether out of desire or necessity) or other personal interests.

Particularly on the political right, some of the preferred solutions are fairly insulting to mothers. It is rare for these to reach the caricatured extremes of the recent book by Stephanie Gordon, *Ask Your Husband*, which posits that women should do little without following the instruction of the book's title. But many people still seem to want women to diminish themselves pre-emptively, either personally or professionally, cutting out any personal interests or pursuits as if that could prove to the world that they are ready and available for mothering.

Another approach, often favored by pro-life Catholics, calls for a greatly enhanced social safety net. It posits that a strong safety net allows expectant mothers to feel confident that they can raise their children without experiencing dire poverty. Thus, they may be less likely to seek abortions. The situation would be still better if women could count on extended families and communities to offer practical help, regardless of the availability of the child's father. Instead of scolding or punishing women for becoming pregnant (possibly under difficult circumstances), they argue, we should embrace the mother and child together, ensuring that they have what they need to thrive.

There is much to admire in this position. It replaces harsh judgment with gentle compassion. It recognizes that mothers both need and deserve material support, especially through pregnancy and their children's early years. It is shocking and shameful to read stories of mothers in the United States who deliver their babies and head out within 48 hours to deliver pizzas or drive Ubers, just to keep food on their family's table. As a society, we need to find better ways to support families, especially those raising children under adverse circumstances.

Realistically, though, we must recognize that this strategy has its limits. We cannot buy good mothers because maternity has moral and spiritual dimensions that no social program can reach. Across the decades, pro-lifers have battled *Roe v. Wade* here in the United States with remarkable tenacity and conviction. Meanwhile, in the world as a whole, abortion has become far more available, while birth rates have plummeted. We need to face the glaring reality that motherhood is extremely difficult, with or without a network of support. Social safety nets have their place, but if we treat them as a reliable solution to the problem of abortion, we risk repeating a mistake that already undermines a culture of life: We risk making mothers invisible.

Invisible Mothers

Invisible mothers are not a uniquely modern problem. This became increasingly clear to me over the years as I reflected on my maternity. I was raised on Bible stories, and I noticed from an early age that the Bible richly affirmed the value of children. In the early years of my marriage, my husband and I struggled with infertility, and I was grateful for the many stories about remarkable biblical women who experienced similar trials. I am now the mother of 5 children, and as my family grew, I was somewhat discomfited to notice that, although numerous descendents are promised to some as a reward for their faith, the Bible offers surprisingly few examples of mothers nurturing large families.

Demonstrators protest outside of the U.S. Supreme Court in Washington, D.C., on May 3, 2022. A draft opinion suggests the U.S. Supreme Court could be poised to overturn the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision that legalized abortion nationwide, according to a report in Politico.



AP Photo/Jose Luis Magana

There are many Biblical mothers with a single child (Elizabeth, Hagar, Sarah) or possibly two (Rebekah, Rachel), but mothers of larger families get surprisingly short shrift. The mother of the Maccabees is impressive (not just for her seven sons), but she remains unnamed in the text. The sons of Jesse and Noah presumably had mothers, but they are not mentioned in the Catholic text. (In Jewish tradition, however, these women are known as Nitzevet and Na'amah.) Leah gave her husband six sons, but he still did not love her.

Why do mothers leave such a light footprint in the Hebrew Scriptures? Maternity was warmly recommended in biblical times, and occasionally we do see honor bestowed on mothers. The woman of Proverbs 31 is presented as strong and discerning, assured that her husband and children will “rise up and call her blessed.” Rebekah, leaving her family to travel to Canaan, is urged to become, “the mother of thousands of millions.” The prophetess Deborah is praised as “a mother in Israel,” which is metaphorical but clearly a compliment.

Still, compared to prophets, warriors or kings, mothers mostly stand on the sidelines. Their struggles and sacrifices specifically as mothers are not commemorated in history and lore. Biblical stories might easily leave readers with the absurd notion that the hardest thing about being a mother

is becoming one.

Of course, overlooking the daily work of mothers is not just a biblical phenomenon. Mothers have been taken for granted in every human society. Bible stories end with the birth of the first child, and fairy tales rarely get further than the wedding. Motherhood itself is folded cheerfully into the “happily ever after”; we need not hear the details. Literature offers us the occasional Kristin Lavransdatter, but most of the time mothers are supporting cast members, offering loving encouragement or possibly just nagging.

The Case for Motherhood

If we squint at disappearing mothers from the right angle, we may start to see the trick. Mothers are taken for granted because their defining contribution is natural and therefore expected. It is built into the female body itself. The act of becoming a mother often simply arises in the course of married life. The woman can rise to the occasion, or not. Mothering, meanwhile, happens in the hidden places: behind closed doors, within closed wombs, at quiet bedsides. Historically, it rarely seemed necessary to incentivize this form of service or inspire young women to rise to it. What else were they going to do with their lives? People have understood for millennia that priests had to be motivated to pray, doctors to heal and soldiers to fight.



Children have enormous needs that cannot be met by laws.

Maternal motivation, until quite recently, probably struck most people as a trivial concern.

Times have changed. Little girls can no longer be seen as presumptive mothers from the day of their birth. Women have our own jobs, degrees and votes. When opportunity beckons from every side, it becomes necessary to make the case for motherhood, helping young women understand why the very real and onerous burdens that come with it are worth carrying. This is difficult, because even as women's rights have advanced, our society has never really stopped taking mothers for granted. No one quite seems to know how.

To get perspective on this, we might consider motherhood alongside another highly demanding form of service: being a soldier. At first glance, it might seem strange to compare mothering to soldiering; one involves killing and the other fosters life. In many ways though, the parallels are quite strong. Historically, these are the only two demanding vocations that have been foisted on people in nearly all human societies, with little or no regard for their personal feelings or level of preparation. The demands are daunting, but failure can bring crippling consequences for individuals and society.

Motherhood is also like military service in that both require recruits to put their very bodies on the line, running very real risks of disfigurement or death. These remarkable demands are justified in the simplest of terms: They are necessary. Civilization itself is at stake.

If motherhood resembles military life in some ways, there are also important differences. In my travels around the world, I have seen innumerable monuments commemorating battles and fallen soldiers. I have never seen a monument to fallen mothers. Maternal death has been

an ever-present reality throughout history, and rates of maternal mortality in the United States are on the rise (between 2019 and 2020, the maternal mortality rate in the United States increased by nearly 20 percent), but there is no special tribute or salute for a woman who gives her life for the sake of a new one. These deaths are widely viewed as medical tragedies, without recognition of the sacrifices made by the woman.

For the living, the story is similar. I reflect on this sometimes in social gatherings with other experienced mothers. We affably commiserate about the various chronic health issues that naturally come with pregnancies, births and miscarriages. Pregnancy may have wreaked havoc on some people's blood sugar or blood pressure; others do years of physical therapy for their back or for pelvic issues. Multiple bouts of mastitis lead to cancer scares, or perhaps postpartum brain chemistry unleashes a mental health crisis. Everyone has their stories. Pregnancy may be natural, but there is a price to be paid for growing multiple humans inside one's body. The Veterans Administration may be a mess, but it exists. The scars of maternal service are treated as a personal health issue.

A Matter of Honor

Maternal honor is a necessary component of a culture of life. If we want women to choose life, we must begin shaping that choice long before any pregnancy occurs. Women should feel affronted by the suggestion that they have a "right to choose," just as a soldier would feel indignant if his commanding officer suggested before a battle that he had a "right to flee" in circumstances of great emotional distress. A soldier is a danger to his unit if he cannot be relied upon to stand his ground on appropriate occasions. Mothers, likewise, will leave their children hideously vulnerable unless they can be relied upon to act out of love, making the necessary sacrifices. A pregnancy is an immense and life-transforming challenge, regardless of the woman's circumstances, which is why motherhood must be viewed through a vocational lens. It must be understood as something bigger than oneself.

Honor has a unique capacity to help people internalize the demands of a role or office, in a way that is personally meaningful. As we are initiated into an honor-based subculture, we come to understand why a particular role matters and why it is worthwhile to become the sort of person who fills it faithfully. This is exactly what maternity requires.

When a woman becomes a mother, there is almost no limit to what the role may demand. Laws and social programs can give mothers some protection and assistance,

but without interior resources, she is likely to fail her family and herself. Appropriate formation may help young women to grasp the magnitude of the maternal role, and this may prepare them to carry its burdens with greater grace and dignity.

Experienced mothers need to play a leading role here, helping to socialize young women and girls. It will be difficult or impossible to instill the right sensibilities, however, if society at large fails to recognize and reward maternal labors. Young women need to view the maternal vocation in an aspirational way, but that will not happen if matrons are largely invisible in society at large, or if they appear mainly as Cinderellas, stepping in when there are messes to be cleaned or scraped knees to bandage, but otherwise lingering at the sidelines. This kind of loving service is invaluable, and mothers will inevitably do a great deal of it, but to the fallen human mind it does not convey dignity, status or respect. Mothers need to be seen in positions that will inspire younger people to follow their own path. It must be remembered as well that people have different talents and temperaments, so a range of different models for motherhood are needed. We cannot expect everyone to be thrilled at the possibility of becoming Marmee from *Little Women*.

When a man or woman serves the state in some noteworthy way, we generally consider that person deserving of both formal honors and, in many cases, opportunities. Many state employees become eligible for pensions after a suitable period of employment. Military veterans get educational support, as well as preferential hiring status for many careers. Sometimes we offer small, honorary perquisites to people who have filled a particular role with distinction for a long time. An emeritus professor may or may not care about library privileges or the continued use of the faculty lounge. These little gestures still mean something, though. They signify that the individual's contributions are valued and remembered.

If grown children are grateful and reasonably successful, mothers may enjoy some assistance or shows of gratitude in their later years. Everything depends on the children, however. Mothers sacrifice their bodies and dedicate years of unpaid service to the great project of keeping the human race in existence. When their great task is completed, their service entitles them to nothing, at least in the eyes of our society and government: no benefits, no perquisites, no special educational or professional opportunities. From a social and material standpoint, they might as well have raised prize orchids instead of children. They are still largely invisible, watching from the sidelines as their children step into adult roles. Fame and fortune are not the

things that truly matter in life, but they do help us to see what our culture values and honors. It will be difficult to persuade women to internalize a sense of maternal honor if they cannot see it mirrored in society at large.

As a young woman contemplating the abortion issue, I was deeply impressed by the injunction in Deuteronomy to “choose life, so that you and your descendants may live.” I wanted to be the sort of person who chose life. I have tried to become that person, and given a chance, I would not advise my younger self to turn back. Still, I have a clearer understanding now of what that decision can cost. The existence of an open-to-life Catholic mother can feel strangely liminal. The world seems befuddled by the entire logic of our lives. We are constantly explaining ourselves to childhood friends, relatives or strangers on buses who gawk at our large families. It is an ominous sign for our culture when maternity feels liminal. But that incomprehension will not be resolved by judges or laws or expanded social safety nets.

It requires honor. Mothers must be honored, and we ourselves must also internalize a sense of honor, which compels us to nurture and protect the vulnerable lives that come into being within our bodies. This is the next step in building a culture of life.

Rachel Lu, a contributing writer for *America*, is a moral philosopher and an associate editor at *Law & Liberty*.



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EDITORS' PICKS

Here are some highlights from the past year.

Paul Farmer was my friend. He should be made a saint—and a doctor of the church.

John Dear

The key to a post-pandemic “new normal”? Solidarity. **The Editors**

We must not let health care become a religion-free zone. **Charles C. Camosy**

Dr. Fauci's Catholic upbringing prepared him to fight against the AIDS crisis.

Michael J. O'Loughlin

Nearly two billion people cannot count on clean water in hospitals. The Catholic Church can help. **Susan K. Barnett**



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PAYING TO PLAY BALL

What happens when capitalism meets Little League?

By John W. Miller

“I *need* you to take him.”

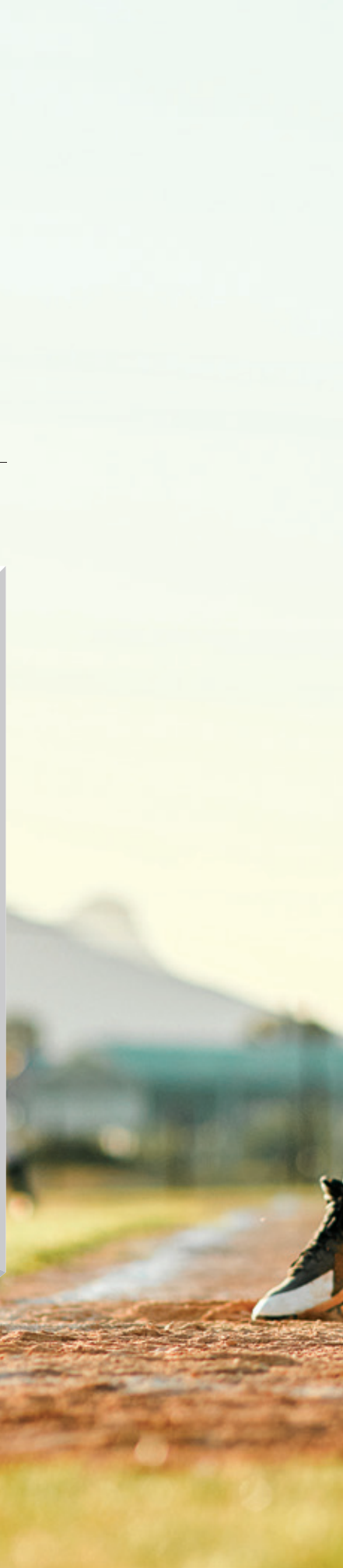
The father on the phone was upset. If his 10-year-old son did not make the team at the \$2,500-per-season private baseball club where I coached, the boy would lose friends and the family’s routines would be upended, he argued. They would have to drive to another suburb for ball games.

Looking for a deeper, more forceful argument, the dad added: “*This* team is our *community*.”

The privatization of American youth sports over the past 40 years is one of those revolutions of late-stage capitalism that should shock us more than it does. We have commodified the play of millions of children into a \$19.2 billion business, weakening volunteer-based programs that promise affordable sports for all children. It is a trend mirrored by our schools, hospitals and military. Once-proud public institutions are being privatized, with many unintended consequences.

For millions of American families, paying private for-profit clubs—euphemistically termed “travel teams”—thousands of dollars a year to organize athletic games for their children is now an unquestioned way of life that shapes family routines, work schedules and commutes. That is why I was sympathetic to the angry dad’s argument and, in the end, took his son for the team. (Also, the boy could really hit. Alas, the father refused to make him work on defense, explaining: “I am not a fielding dad.”)

And, in general, I was sympathetic to all the players and their families during the four years I worked for that for-profit baseball company for amateur players. I will call it Club Elite. (I was there as a coach, not a journalist, so I am not naming any names.) After all, what we were doing together, learning to play baseball well, was often deliriously fun. I loved it, and so did the kids. Nobody burned





Less than 8 percent of Major Leaguers in 2020 were African-American, down from over 20 percent in the 1970s. M.L.B. has launched a patchwork of programs in an attempt to address this disparity.



If parents are investing thousands of dollars in their child's team, they want results.

out. For the most part, parents were supportive and enthusiastic, and I got along with them. And, on an individual level, their choices made sense to me. Who wouldn't want a better baseball team for their child? This is America. But what about the children whose families cannot afford such a team?

Surveying the Field

It is impossible to ignore the bigger picture. The youth version of baseball, born out of folk games played on village greens and codified in New York City around 1850, has been fundamentally transformed by private clubs. Baseball, and its sister sport, softball, increasingly mirror the growing inequality in American life, dying in cities and booming in the suburbs. Baseball is also the major sport most likely to shrivel in our lifetimes, simply because it is not loved by a majority of American youth the way it used to be.

To be sure, baseball is still an immensely popular game for American children. In 2020, 3.4 million children ages 6 to 12 played baseball, second only to basketball (4.1 million) among team sports. But the percentage of American children ages 6 to 12 who play baseball has declined to 12.2 percent in 2020 from 16.5 percent in 2008.

Basketball, soccer and other team sports have also been privatized—but none so aggressively as baseball, the most expensive of the team sports. And baseball seems to have a higher burnout rate, as evidenced by decreased participation as children grow older: Among children ages 13 to 17, baseball participation dropped off by more than 16 percent in 2020 from the previous year to 1.8 million, while basketball slightly gained participants, growing 2.5 percent to 3.6 million.

The result: In the United States, baseball is becoming a mostly white country-club sport for upper-class families to consume, like a snorkeling vacation or a round of golf. “The way it’s going, all pro players are going to be rich, white kids from the suburbs, or [they will be] Dominican or Venezuelan,” one major league front office analyst told me. Major League Baseball has been aware of the problem for a long

time. In 1989, it founded Reviving Baseball in Inner Cities, or R.B.I., which has had mixed success, and suffers from its top-down organizational structure and tends to be heavy on photo ops.

Of course, in some communities, volunteers still teach the game for free to the next generation, and children of all backgrounds have the same opportunities. Many schools, including Catholic institutions, still field ambitious and well-organized teams. And some places even permit unsupervised play. All Americans are always free to play catch in the street or backyard with their sons and daughters.

According to Catholic social teaching, there is no question that all children should have access to affordable sports teams. “Playing sport itself has its own internal goods and intrinsic rewards,” Patrick Kelly, S.J., told me. He is a professor at the University of Detroit Mercy who has studied the theology and spirituality of sports and is the author of the book *Catholic Perspectives on Sports: From Medieval to Modern Times*. “If we’re concerned about the common good, we should make sure that all children who are able to participate can do so.”

Pope Francis, a soccer fan, has spoken out about the importance of sports. “There is great beauty in the harmony of certain movements and in the power of teamwork,” the pope said. “When it is like this, sport transcends the level of pure physicality and takes us into the arena of the spirit and even of mystery. And these moments are accompanied by great joy and satisfaction, which we all can share, even those not competing.”

Francis has also said that sports should be available for “the youth who live at the edges of society.” The children who “play with a rugged old deflated ball in the suburbs of some great cities or the streets of small towns” should be given the opportunity to “take up sport in circumstances of dignity, especially those who are excluded due to poverty,” he said.

America’s national pastime might be expensive and bureaucratic these days, but it was not always this way. “Baseball started as a folk game, with kids playing in parks



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and in the streets, with all different kinds of rules,” said Tom Gilbert, author of *How Baseball Happened*, a history of the game’s development in the 19th century. “But obviously that’s not happening anymore.”

While I was growing up in Brussels in the 1980s as the son of U.S. immigrants to Belgium, baseball seemed to me to be a pillar of American culture, one of the glories of my ancestral homeland. During the summers, when we visited family in Maryland, my uncles taught me how to play. To be an American was to love baseball, I thought.

In the 1980s, Brussels had a large expatriate community and a very good Little League, with hundreds of boys and girls playing at a level high enough to send teams to the Little League World Series, including a 1984 team that featured the first girl ever to play at the tournament. Every spring, the U.S. ambassador to Belgium threw out the first pitch before a crowd of thousands. Baseball, it was clear, was a big deal.

That was, more or less, the high point of youth baseball in American culture. Since the 1980s, the increasing popularity of professional basketball and football and other youth sports like soccer and lacrosse, as well as video games and hundreds of other factors, have slowly whittled away baseball’s place of prominence.

When I moved to Pittsburgh for a job at The Wall Street Journal in 2011, I was charmed to find a city full of ball fields, then stunned at how empty they always were, or how filled with kids playing soccer or football. In 2017, after I quit the Journal, I went looking for a baseball coaching job. I had played in college, coached high school, scouted

for an M.L.B. team and coached dozens of youth teams.

I searched for “Pittsburgh baseball coaching job” online and soon found a gig. It was in the suburbs, half an hour along an interstate dotted with Starbucks, a Target and a Dick’s Sporting Goods and amid a sprawling development of homes, schools, churches and malls.

Club Elite was typical of private baseball clubs, which market their fortitude with names like Aces, Hardcore, Dawgs, Shockers, Outlaws and Rebels. At one tournament, I spotted a team called the Young Vets. My club was owned by a man who had played baseball in college. He started coaching teams in his 20s and charged families for membership.

The private baseball and softball business model relies on scaling up to as many teams as possible. If you can get 20 teams of 12 players each paying \$2,500 a season, that is \$600,000 in revenue. With part-time coaches making only a few thousand dollars a season—the equivalent of \$10 an hour if you include driving to practices and games—club owners can easily make several hundred thousand dollars a year.

The Club Elite team included only a couple of Black players, and its overall demographics were typical of white American suburbs. The parents of my players almost all worked in one of the three pillars of the modern service economy: finance, real estate and construction, or medicine.

Another source of revenue for owners is private lessons, which cost up to \$150 an hour. Parents are told these are needed year-round if their child is to play in college. That is why private clubs own or rent indoor facilities and gyms. The intense focus on individual development is another practice borrowed from professional baseball, where



Pope Francis has said that sports should be available for 'the youth who live at the edges of society.'

players now work out year-round in specialized gyms.

The intense specialization pushed by many parents is a danger to children. “Young kids need to have a sense of themselves,” said Father Kelly. “They need the freedom to discover what they enjoy, or it can turn into living out somebody else’s agenda.”

The Major Players

There is so much money in private youth sports companies that former Major League professionals are now investing in clubs instead of looking for jobs in professional baseball. In 2001, Hall of Famer Cal Ripken led the way by founding Ripken Baseball, which organizes pay-to-play tournaments all over the country.

In January, at the annual American Baseball Coaching Conference in Chicago, I interviewed Brad Clement, chief executive officer of Perfect Game, one of the most prominent private tournament organizers in the country. “What we offer is a premium service for the elite,” he told me. Mr. Clement was a school administrator and volunteer baseball coach in the 1990s. He even took a team to the Little League World Series before he joined Perfect Game. “We think that we can coexist with recreational baseball providers,” he told me. “We think you can have both.”

The problem with that argument is that baseball falls apart when the best players are siphoned off. A good example is pitching—youth baseball relies heavily on the skill of its pitchers. Without strike-throwers or fielders to back them up, baseball is absurdist slow-motion theater starring one pitcher hurling pebbles to the backstop. The rise of privatized sports has drawn the best pitchers away from volunteer-based leagues, raising the likelihood that a local recreational team lacks the skills needed for a decent game, driving average players to find other sports or to quit. Or, if

they can afford it, to seek out private clubs.

When former Major League catcher Charlie Greene was a boy in Miami in the 1980s, he learned baseball from his dad and other volunteer adults. He never left Miami to play. “We played one game a week, and it was the highlight of my week,” he recalled.

Mr. Greene, who is currently a minor league coordinator and coach for the Milwaukee Brewers, said what troubles him is not pushy parents, showboating players or bullying coaches. It is this simple fact: Baseball is no longer a game that is for everybody. “It’s become a white elitist sport,” Mr. Greene told me. “It’s a fading game.” In Florida, some high-level programs now cost over \$10,000 a season. “I know families who’ve mortgaged their homes so their kids can play baseball,” he said.

Like Mr. Greene, many in Major League Baseball are alarmed at what is happening to youth baseball, particularly its fading appeal to African-American youth. Less than 8 percent of Major Leaguers in 2020 were African-American, down from over 20 percent in the 1970s. M.L.B. has launched a patchwork of programs in an attempt to address this disparity. Some M.L.B. teams run youth academies in urban locations, but the results thus far seem to be centered around photo ops and good community relations. Getting more children to play does not seem as important to M.L.B. as selling more tickets, and even today’s youth players are not necessarily tomorrow’s adult fans. “When the Boomers die, who’s going to watch baseball?” asked Mr. Greene.

Baseball might be fading as an American civic institution, but on the teams I coached, players and families were enthusiastic and usually joyful around the ballfield. And the truth is that I loved it, too. It is fun to teach an infield to spin double plays, pitchers to throw changeups for strikes

and outfielders to dive for balls in the gap.

We had a good team and got better every year. Through a sophisticated scoring app designed by a company called GameChanger, I had access to advanced statistics for each of my preteen players. It was fun to analyze numbers and make my lineups every Friday, even if my players were only 10 years old.

The app, which costs around \$10 a month, also generates an artificial intelligence broadcast of each game. Parents described to me the pleasure of going on the road and listening to the AI voice narrate their son's baseball game.

I realized that the parents were not just buying baseball instruction for their children. They were buying entertainment for themselves, and they were paying for community. At a time when this sprawling country lacks shared public spaces, private sports clubs are a great way for people to share time together. But that community should not be available only for those who can pay for it.

"One of the things that youth sports provides is being part of community, of being part of something bigger than yourself," said Father Kelly. "We need to be careful that we don't move in an individualistic direction."

The Cost of Commodification

One of the challenges of pay-to-play ball is that the stakes are much higher for many families than they might be with programs that cost less. If parents are investing thousands of dollars in their child's team, they want results. Tournaments, while usually fun, could be intense. Occasionally, parents would lose it. One mother on an opposing team got so angry at me because I didn't volunteer to correct an umpire's call in our favor that she buzzed me in the parking lot with her pickup truck. On Monday mornings, I would receive at least one phone call from parents complaining that I hadn't played their son in the position they desired, or batted him in the right spot in the order.

And coaches have a similar tendency to lean into that intensity. Every Monday I sent out an email wrapping up the weekend games. I realized my words were objectively over-the-top for 10-year-olds, but the coach in me couldn't help himself. "I talked to your kids about the imperative of making adjustments," I once wrote. "While you shouldn't let failure overwhelm you, and make you angry and sad, you also shouldn't accept it. Losing is not O.K. When things are not going well, you need to fight back and make adjustments." But I also did my best to counter this intensity by naming feelings and getting boys to talk about them.

"You can be angry, sad, proud, ashamed, happy, frustrated, amused," I said once after a tough loss. "Coach," my short-stop said. "I have so many of those."

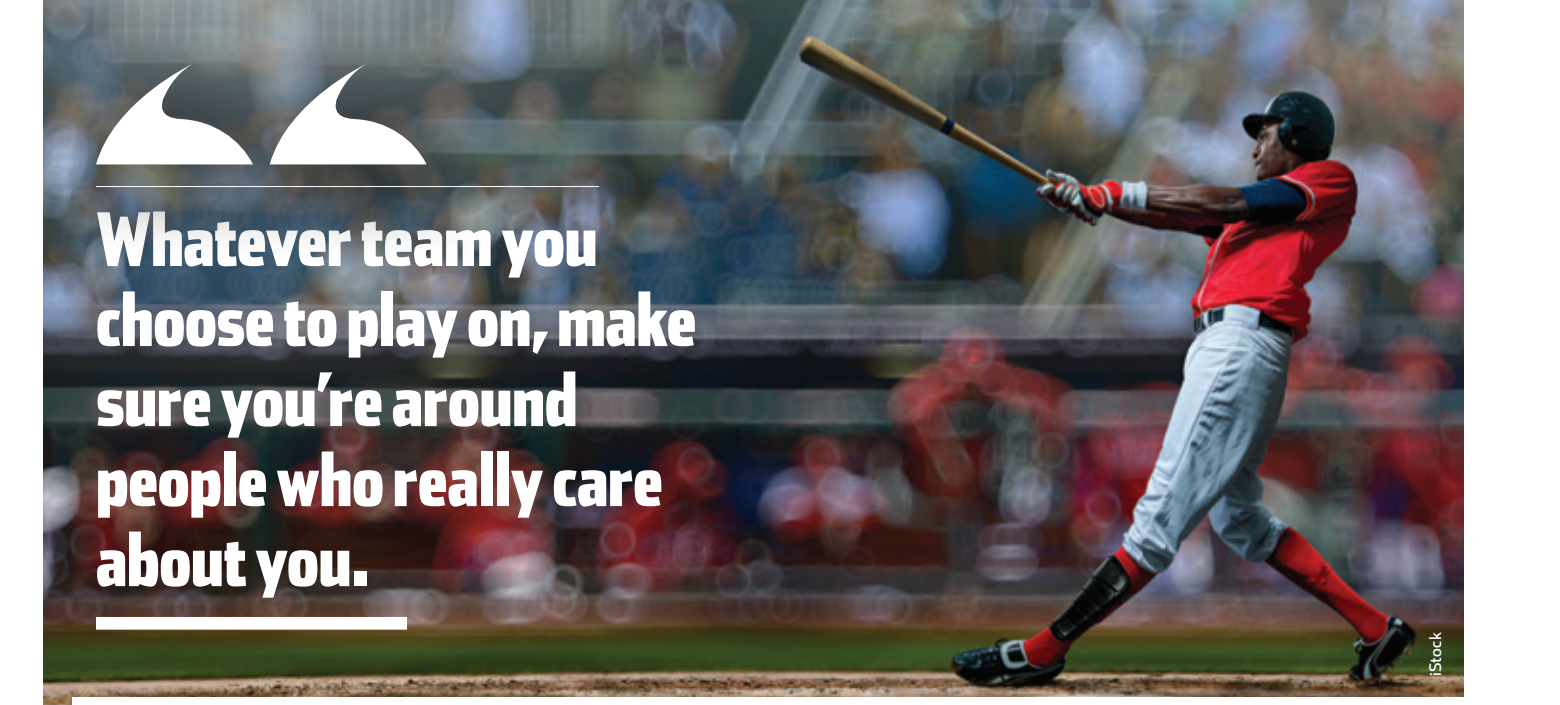
After each season, families visited other clubs, the way they would visit colleges, and determined where their son would play the following season. Coaches from some programs would recruit players. Sometimes, they'd even send text messages to the children themselves. Once a player and family agreed to play on a club, they would sign a "contract" committing the family to pay a big portion of the fee upfront, and the club to offer a spot on the team to the player.

I hadn't thought about how much play had been commodified until I decided to quit my coaching job. I had managed the same team, including many of the same children, for four years. I had managed well over 100 games and had run a couple of hundred practices. But in the world of private sports companies, I was only part of a community as long as I was useful. By leaving the firm, I was severing my relationship with the game, and thus with the players and families. I didn't own a field or indoor facility. I didn't control a website or uniform store. I still had skills to offer, but without the infrastructure, I wouldn't get far.

The irony of these developments in youth baseball, the historian Mr. Gilbert told me, is that baseball's origins are decidedly grass roots. The game grew out of informal 19th-century bat-and-ball games. In New York City, the growth of the city's working classes and men's clubs created an environment where people started forming clubs in order to play the game. Immediately, adults taught children to play and slowly came up with the idea of mimicking big league uniforms and leagues. American Legion baseball was founded in 1925. Little League Baseball was founded in the 1930s. The mythology of Little League is that a man named Carl Stotz in Williamsport, Pa., got the idea of offering real uniforms for children. Little League Baseball would be a simulation of the real thing, operated, umpired and coached by volunteers.

Perhaps Little League Baseball has been too successful. Its keystone tournament, the Little League World Series, has earned sparkling TV ratings, glamorized youth baseball and made it seem like something worth paying a lot of money for. The most famous privatized for-profit youth baseball tournaments, like Dreams Park in Cooperstown, N.Y., or Ripken in Aberdeen, Md., are largely replicas of the Little League World Series, for a price.

There might be a different way of doing things, but it requires dedicated grass-roots volunteers with a vision.



**Whatever team you
choose to play on, make
sure you're around
people who really care
about you.**

Catholic youth organizations are still around and fighting to retain children who might otherwise migrate to privatized pay-to-play sports. The popularity travel teams has resulted in “a shift in mentality” where parents adopt a “return-on-investment” mindset, said Dobie Moser, a director with Catholic Youth Organization in Cleveland. “When this happens...play becomes work.” Instead, the C.Y.O. in Cleveland, which offers athletic activities to over 20,000 kids, strives to offer a return to the basic values of youth sports. “The top two reasons children begin to play sports are having fun and being with friends,” said Mr. Moser. C.Y.O. baseball programs, in particular, have lost players to travel programs, he said. “It’s sad what’s happened with baseball, but at the end of the day, you cannot mandate the decisions of parents,” said Mr. Moser.

Nelson Cooper, 25, is another grass-roots example. When Mr. Cooper moved to Pittsburgh for work, he was shocked at the way private clubs had taken over his favorite sport. He grew up in Seattle, where he was often the only Black player on his baseball teams. In Pittsburgh, he saw the racial divide getting worse. “There are so many teams that put money first and the interests of the kids second,” he told me. “I have no issue if people are willing to pay, and have the resources, but there should be options for people who can’t afford to pay.”

In 2020, Mr. Cooper founded the Pittsburgh Hardball Academy, which offers tournament play similar to what private clubs offer but eliminates the big fees. So far, Hardball Academy has three teenage teams and around 45 players. It also runs clinics in the winter that cost \$15.

Mr. Cooper would like to have more players, but it can be hard to find the coaches. “The adults in these communities are the ones who stopped playing baseball in the 1980s,

when [Michael] Jordan and the N.B.A. and the N.F.L. really took off,” he told me. “They didn’t play baseball as children, so they’re not going to coach.”

Another youth baseball organization, the Pittsburgh Avengers, founded in 2018, offers competition against private clubs for a few hundred dollars a season. There are similar organizations in other American cities, set up by coaches in hopes of upending the control of youth baseball by private clubs.

On a recent Sunday, I checked out one of the Hardball Academy’s clinics, inside a cavernous public sports hall in the eastern part of Pittsburgh, one of the city’s poorer districts. There were over 80 players under 18, half of them children of color, running through throwing, fielding and hitting drills.

At the end of the clinic, Mr. Cooper gathered all the players in a circle and delivered a warning: “Every single one of you is a paycheck for somebody,” he said, referring to private baseball clubs who aggressively recruit in order to beef up their numbers and their income. “So whatever team you choose to play on, make sure you’re around people who really care about you.”

I talked to a man named Ollie Scott Sr. He had taken his son, Ollie Jr., to the clinic to take cuts in the batting cage and follow fielding drills. “There was a lot of baseball in downtown Pittsburgh when I was a kid,” said Mr. Scott, who is 38. “It’s all gone now, and the other travel teams charge too much. So we come here, where it’s just about the baseball.”

John W. Miller is a Pittsburgh-based former Wall Street Journal staff reporter and co-director of the PBS film “Moundville.”



A PILGRIMAGE TO ITALY... OFTEN OVER DRINKS

WITH JESUITICAL: A PODCAST FOR YOUNG CATHOLICS

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Catholic Ministry Uses Simple, Effective Methods to Supply Safe Water to Poor Communities



The idea of tapping an underground source to supply families with clean water is nothing new. Jesus Christ's encounter with the woman at the well is a case in point, and productive wells are mentioned in the Old Testament too.

Much has changed since 30 A.D.; yet in the world's developing countries, water access is an ongoing struggle, and simple wells remain a primary source for survival.

"It may seem strange to those of us who simply turn a kitchen tap to get our water, but most families living in the developing countries of this world have a completely different perspective on water. They consider it very challenging to find, and they must typically rely on ground sources such as streams and ponds for what they need — sources that are also used by animals and are often filled with bacteria and parasites," explained Jim Cavnar, president of Cross Catholic Outreach, a respected Catholic ministry working to solve water scarcity problems around the globe.

Cavnar is familiar with the value of quality wells because his ministry has funded the construction of many water systems around the world. (See related story on opposite page.)

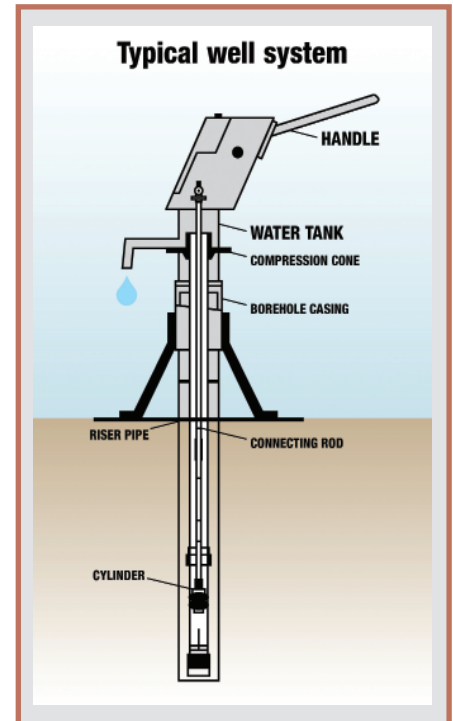
"Our ministry partners in the field typically begin this work by ensuring the community will be involved and will play a role in the process," Cavnar said. "Only after this commitment has been made does the partner move on to the technical side of the job."

The next steps involve hiring a trusted, local drilling company and commissioning a hydrogeological survey to determine the best location for the well or water system. Once experts have chosen a promising site, a huge rig is brought in to drill the well. Since some areas of the world suffer from regular droughts that can lower the water table, determining the depth of the well becomes a critical decision too.

"We've had to drill down 200 meters or more in some cases to ensure we reach a plentiful source of water," Cavnar explained.

After the well shaft is encased in a special tubing to preserve its strength and purity, pump tests are run to ensure that there is enough water for the community, and water quality is checked to make sure the water is safe for people and animals.

Once this work is done and additional pumping equipment is installed (some water systems also include storage tanks or solar-powered pumping systems), it is time



The well systems Cross Catholic Outreach installs in the field represent a life-transforming gift to families who have no other reliable source of water or who have been drawing their supply from contaminated ponds or rivers.

to involve the community again. A water committee is trained to make minor repairs on the water system, monitor the use of the new well and ensure it is maintained properly in the years ahead.

"The entire community buzzes with excitement on the day a new well is blessed and dedicated to God and turned over to the people to use," Cavnar said. "It is a deeply moving experience and we often share those stories with our donors because they were instrumental in making it happen. In fact, most of the U.S. Catholics who support this work will fund one water project after another because they see the incredible impact these projects have on the lives of the poor."

Readers interested in supporting Cross Catholic Outreach's water program and other ministries to the poor can contribute through the brochure inserted in this issue or by sending a tax-deductible gift to Cross Catholic Outreach, Dept. AC01971, PO Box 97168, Washington, DC 20090-7168. The ministry has a special need for partners willing to make gifts on a monthly basis. Use the inserted brochure to become a Mission Partner, or write "Monthly Mission Partner" on mailed checks to be contacted about setting up those arrangements.

Cross Catholic Outreach Remains Committed to Addressing Water Scarcity and Its Impact on the Poor

Once a year, we set aside a special date to focus on the need for safe water in poor communities around the globe. It's called "World Water Day," and its intention is to bring about change; to help alleviate the suffering of families who currently rely on contaminated water sources to survive.

"To my way of thinking, Catholics should consider every day World Water Day, and the Church should always have the suffering of the poor on its mind," reflected Jim Cavnar, president of Cross Catholic Outreach, a respected Catholic ministry working to end water scarcity hardships in developing countries around the world. "The challenges poor families face because of unsafe water are far too big to focus on just once a year."

Cavnar added that his intention is not to make this day a source of dread or guilt, but rather to make it an opportunity to celebrate the amazing work Catholics are doing to solve the water crisis in developing countries around the globe.

"I consider the water projects we do in partnership with the Church as triumphs and as a direct reflection of Christ's command to love one another. We should be excited by what our dedicated priests, religious sisters and Catholic ministries are accomplishing, and we should be inspired to help them continue that important work," he said. "I know that is how the American Catholics who contribute to Cross Catholic Outreach's projects feel about it. Once they hear about a specific need, they are eager to be a part of the solution."

While Cavnar's optimism is justified, he is also mindful of the challenges involved in addressing water scarcity. The projects his ministry undertakes are done in collaboration with strong in-country ministry partners that can organize local community leaders and oversee the technical aspects of the project.

"The bishops and priests we work with play a critical role in the process. They choose the location of the wells we help install, and they organize the drilling equipment and workers needed to lay any pipes necessary to deliver the water to community homes, schools or agricultural projects," Cavnar said. "It's a big job, but one we have accomplished successfully all over the world, so our donors can be



In developing countries, poor families often rely on contaminated streams and ponds for their water. They often travel for hours over rough terrain to reach these water sources and make multiple daily trips to collect what they need.

confident that when they fund a water system in a poor community, our efforts will produce impressive results."

In this past year, Cross Catholic Outreach has been working to fund 24 water and sanitation projects in 12 different developing countries. Some of the projects have been completed and others are still in progress, but together, they will eliminate the burden of water scarcity for more than 225,000 people.

"Our focus now is on expanding the scale of our effort, and to do that, we need to inspire more American Catholics to contribute to the cause," Cavnar said. "Many of the wells we install are simple and use a manual hand pump, so they are resilient and relatively inexpensive to build, but there

are still costs involved, so we need donor support to fund the work. The more families who become involved in this mission of mercy, the more we can accomplish."

Cavnar also encouraged American Catholics to pray for their brothers and sisters in developing countries and for the clergy who serve them.

"Life is very hard in these poor communities, and poverty is often extreme. Families there are struggling to find water, and when they draw it from contaminated sources, they often get sick," he said. "Our goal is to end that suffering, but those efforts will take time. Until they are helped by one of our water projects, they will need our prayers for safety and health."

How to Help

To fund Cross Catholic Outreach's effort to help the poor worldwide, use the postage-paid brochure inserted in this newspaper or mail your gift to Cross Catholic Outreach, Dept. AC01971, PO Box 97168, Washington, DC 20090-7168. The brochure also includes instructions on becoming a Mission Partner and making a regular monthly donation to this cause.

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



Finding Common Ground Amid Disagreement

The A.C.L.U. and Catholic health care

By Charles Bouchard and Anthony Rotherth

*Editor's note. A draft of a U.S. Supreme Court opinion in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* that was leaked to the press on May 2 suggests that the court will overturn the decision made in the case *Roe v. Wade* in 1973, which legalized abortion nationally.*

Though the court's final decision in the present case will not be known until it is published and remains open to revision until then, the draft opinion by Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito has resulted in a firestorm of speculation and argument across the political spectrum. In its current form, the opinion would return decision-making on the legality of abortion to individual state legislatures.

Abortion has long been among the most contested issues in the United States between Catholic health care ministries, including member groups of the Catholic Health Association of the United States (C.H.A.), and civil liberties groups, including the American Civil Liberties Union (A.C.L.U.)

The following essay on areas of disagreement and opportunities for collaboration is an edited version of a conversation between Anthony Rotherth of the A.C.L.U. and Charles Bouchard, O.P., of the C.H.A. The conversation, which took place before the leak of the court's draft opinion, has been edited for length and clarity.

Anthony Rotherth. Because there are serious disagreements between the A.C.L.U. and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, the C.H.A. and other ministries of the Catholic Church about what the law should be on various important matters, it often seems that in our current cultural climate, there are no real prospects for collaboration between the A.C.L.U. and Catholic health care ministries. But even substantial disagreement on some critical questions does not mean the chasm between us is so vast it precludes partnerships.

The most prominent area on which we disagree is on the question of whether abortion should be legal. I think most Americans know that we at the A.C.L.U. believe that pregnant persons have a right to decide whether to continue a pregnancy. Of course, this stands in marked contrast to the official position of the Catholic Church. We differ as well about access to birth control and sterilization.

Similarly, questions around L.G.B.T.Q. rights are well-known points of divide that cannot be ignored. While the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches “every sign of unjust discrimination [against L.G.B.T.Q. individuals] should be avoided,” the church has opposed marriage for same-sex couples, adoption by same-sex couples and rules barring

gender-identity discrimination in employment and health care. But an examination of areas where we do agree—or have similar goals—shows the possibility of significant opportunities for collaboration and partnership, even as we acknowledge the differences that remain.

Charles Bouchard, O.P. Until recently, my impression of the A.C.L.U. was mostly negative. I suppose this is not surprising, because my work in Catholic health care involves a number of controversial reproductive issues which we see in very different ways.

My impressions were shaped by a number of things. I had seen the A.C.L.U./Merger Watch publication “Health Care Denied: Patients and Physicians Speak Out About Catholic Hospitals and the Threat to Women’s Health and Lives.” It featured the story of Tamesha Means, who alleged that a transfer from a Michigan Catholic hospital had endangered her life.

I also knew that the A.C.L.U. sued the U.S.C.C.B. in 2013, alleging that its *Ethical and Religious Directives* constituted medical negligence, and again in 2016, claiming the bishops “routinely denied survivors of human trafficking access to critical health care because of religious beliefs.” I also knew that the A.C.L.U. had challenged the city of Philadelphia to shut down Catholic Social Services because it would not allow adoptions by same sex and unmarried couples.

Catholic hospitals drew negative attention—and lawsuits—from the A.C.L.U. and affiliated groups for refusing to perform some procedures related to gender transition. The story of Oliver Knight, whose surgery at a Catholic hospital was cancelled (“Catholic Bishops stopped My Surgery Because I’m Transgender”) is featured prominently on the A.C.L.U.’s web page.

A.R. It is true we filed those hospital lawsuits—and would do so again—because we believe that hospitals have a duty to provide their patients, Catholic and non-Catholic, proper care without deviations mandated by administrators.

Despite our differences, we at the A.C.L.U. and the health care ministries of the Catholic Church also share many policy goals. There are many areas of convergence, including concerns over pregnancy discrimination, pay equity, systemic racism, self-determination for Indigenous people, immigration, capital punishment and conscientious objection to war.

Both the A.C.L.U. and the bishops support the Pregnant Workers’ Fairness Act, which would prohibit employers from denying pregnant workers the temporary

job modifications they need to keep working and have a healthy pregnancy.

On the question of *pay equity*, as the U.S. bishops put it in 1919, “women who are engaged at the same tasks of men should receive equal pay for equal amounts and qualities of work.” The A.C.L.U. echoes this when they say “the central concept of civil liberties is that all individuals have the fundamental right to be judged on the basis of their individual characteristics and capabilities, not the characteristics and capabilities that are supposedly shared by any group or class to which they might belong.”

On the issue of *racism*, the bishops of the United States recognize racism is systemic and continues to negative impacts in our communities. The A.C.L.U. agrees with the bishops. We both want a society in which people and communities of color have full access to the rights and benefits of American society, and we both are committed to seeking solutions that go to the roots of racial injustice, including understanding the complex legacy of slavery in society, economic development, culture, politics and law. Indeed, the church is examining its own participation in the institution of slavery and making efforts to begin to atone.

The bishops describe “the devastation caused by policies of expansion and manifest destiny, fueled by racist attitudes, that led to the near eradication of Native American peoples and their cultures.” We share the view that Native Americans have the right to retain their cultural and religious heritage and that the violation of that right has led to poverty and associated social problems.

On the issue of *immigration*, the U.S. bishops have called the faithful to treat immigrants as they would treat Christ. The A.C.L.U. believes in immigrants’ freedom, dignity and equality. That is why both the bishops and the A.C.L.U. are leading advocates for comprehensive immigration reform to repair our badly damaged system and replace it with one that honors and respects the dignity of newly arrived individuals.

With regard to *capital punishment*, both the A.C.L.U. and the U.S.C.C.B. believe the death penalty must be abolished. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says “the death penalty is inadmissible because it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person.” The A.C.L.U. opposes the death penalty because it is dehumanizing, arbitrary and racist.

Like the U.S. bishops, the A.C.L.U. supports a right of *conscientious objection* both to all military actions and to military service in particular wars. In fact, the A.C.L.U.’s creation was prompted by abuses of this and other civil liberties in the First World War.



This nation's Catholic ministries are powerful advocates for important policy changes needed to advance the common good.

C.B. My negative perspective on the A.C.L.U. began to change after I did a podcast with Gloria Purvis for America Media. The working title of that podcast was “Why does the A.C.L.U. Hate Catholic Health Care?” As I prepared for the podcast, I took a closer look. I compared the A.C.L.U.’s advocacy agenda with the Catholic Health Association’s core values and policy priorities. To my surprise, I discovered significant overlap in values and advocacy on a number of issues.

For instance, as you note, C.H.A., the U.S. bishops and the A.C.L.U. all support immigration reform, racial justice and a ban on capital punishment. Catholic health care is committed to addressing inequities in access and outcomes for minority groups. We address socioeconomic factors that contribute to those inequities through our Community Benefit programs. C.H.A. also has a “We Are Called” initiative, which is designed to get explicit support from every Catholic health system for racial equity and to work with “partners who share these convictions to implement wide-sweeping change and eliminate the racial inequities in our marginalized communities.”

We share the A.C.L.U.’s concern for the rights of disabled persons, victims of human trafficking and, of course, religious liberty. For example, the A.C.L.U. and the U.S. bishops both signed a letter supporting protection for Oak Flat, a traditional Native American sanctuary and burial ground, because of our shared interest in religious freedom.

A.R. I feel compelled to note the A.C.L.U. is clear that religious liberty is the right to belief and expression as well as the guarantee that the government will not favor one faith over others or religion over non-religion; it is not a license to discrimination. The truth is, however, we could spend more time describing the many other areas of agreement on policy questions.

Our primary sources of inspiration are different from the Catholic Church and occasionally place us on different sides of an issue. Those engaged in Catholic ministry find guidance in the teachings of the church, while the A.C.L.U. begins with the U.S. Constitution’s promises that individuals not only will have autonomy from the government when it comes to fundamental decisions about how to live their lives but also the government’s support in ensuring equity. Even when we support the same policies, our reasons will not be identical.

In the 1990s, the A.C.L.U. and the church were effective working together to oppose a “children exclusion” provision, which would have denied an increase in a family’s benefits upon the birth of a child if the child was born while a parent was receiving assistance. The A.C.L.U. thought it would punish poor women for having children and violate the guarantee that individuals could make their own reproductive choices without government interference. The bishops worried it would encourage abortions.

C.B. There are important nuances that distinguish our positions from those of the A.C.L.U. For instance, the church roots its views in Scripture and church tradition rather than constitutional autonomy. While we support human freedom, we tend to favor the term *human dignity* because we think that rights language can sometimes be stripped down to mean only non-interference. We see human dignity as a positive value that requires cooperation with others to secure access to basic human goods. This is why we largely agree on the important role of government in ensuring equity.

The A.C.L.U. emphasizes individual freedom, which reflects its longstanding commitment to free speech. Catholics support freedom, too, but we see individual freedom more as a prerequisite than as an end in itself. Freedom expands possibilities but it must aim at both human dignity and the common good.

There are two reasons we will probably never agree on abortion—first because we start with different assumptions about when human life begins and second because the A.C.L.U. gives priority to a woman’s right to reproductive freedom. We recognize the dignity of both mother and child. We honor them both, even if there are times when we must allow the unavoidable death of the child to save the mother’s life.

Mr. Rothert and I agreed to write this article together because we both see the dangers of polarization and politicization in this country, and because we know much of that polarization focuses on abortion. We fear that Americans are losing sight of the fundamental human goods that draw

us together and give us common purpose.

The Catholic Church and Catholic health care ministries are not anti-woman, anti-L.G.B.T.Q. or anti-freedom. Catholic religious women (aka “the sisters”) established nearly all of our Catholic hospitals and many Catholic schools and universities. They served as leaders long before women in other areas. The institutions they founded were open to everyone.

Too often, the church reacts to its enemies by a kind of false integralism that says “wrong on one thing, wrong on everything.” It is my hope that we can be more discerning and recognize common values in a way that will be a model for others. I also hope that the A.C.L.U. will show some of its traditional respect for minority voices and religious freedom by respecting our beliefs about the sanctity of life and working with us on other aspects of human dignity.

A.R. We have real differences, but we have real opportunities for collaboration. The notion of “strange bed-fellows” advocating for the same policy result has always been powerful, and remains so with today’s polarization. It is unexpected. And it forces policy makers to consider that a policy choice arrived at by thoughtful people with different approaches deserves consideration.

The greatest barrier to collaboration is how we handle serious, firm disagreements about vital questions. There is no reason to expect that the A.C.L.U. or the bishops will change their views soon, even if each wishes the other would. And I confess to being distracted by protestations that institutions are not anti-woman, anti-L.G.B.T.Q. or anti-freedom when it appears to me that the laws and policies they support often are.

This nation’s Catholic ministries are powerful advocates for important policy changes needed to advance the common good of our communities. As our nation’s premier advocate for civil liberties, the A.C.L.U. is also a force that influences policy-making. We can accept our strong differences and take advantage of comparable policy views to strengthen our advocacy on points of agreement. We can show mutual respect by working to understand the respective values that led us to the same conclusion. There are many areas where unity and collaboration would help, but too often we shy away from those opportunities because of firmly held opposing views on issues that we both view as fundamental. Is this barrier insurmountable?

Charles Bouchard, O.P., is the senior director of theology and sponsorship at the Catholic Health Association of the United States. Anthony Rothert is the director of integrated advocacy at the American Civil Liberties Union of Missouri.

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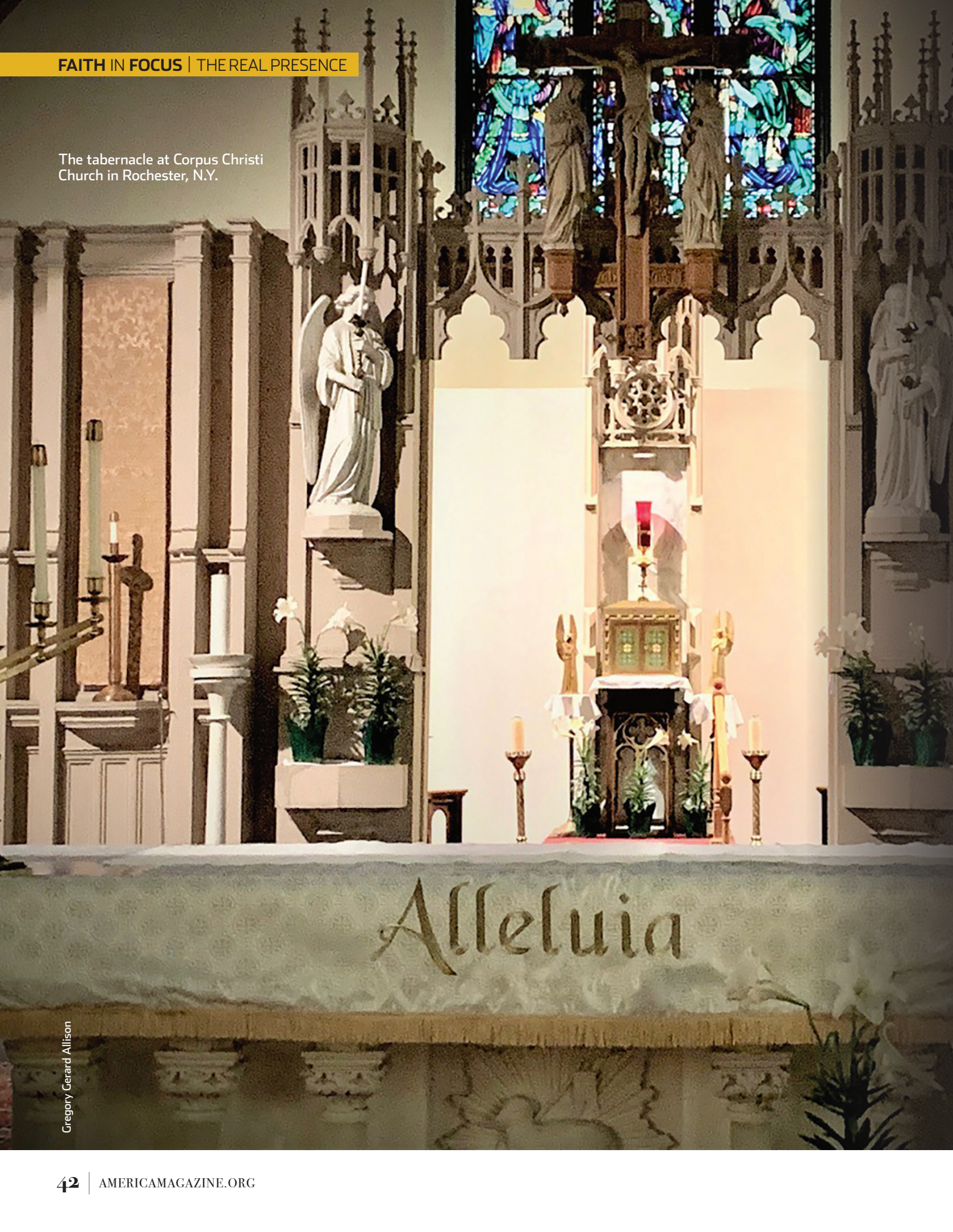
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The tabernacle at Corpus Christi Church in Rochester, N.Y.



WHERE CHRIST DWELLS


How a stolen tabernacle
made clearer my belief in
the real presence

By Sonja Livingston

*Editor's Note: This month marks the beginning of a nearly three-year-long eucharistic revival called for by the U.S. Conference of Catholic bishops, starting with the feast of Corpus Christi on June 16 and culminating with a eucharistic congress in Indianapolis in 2024. The goal of this grassroots campaign is to spark "a movement of Catholics across the United States, healed, converted, formed, and unified by an encounter with Jesus in the Eucharist." In the spirit of this revival, **America** will feature regular essays and reflections on the Eucharist for our readers. For more on the revival, visit eucharisticrevival.org.*

When Father Daniel announced that the tabernacle at Corpus Christi Church had been stolen, my eyes flew to the back altar. I was tuned into Mass on livestream, so my view of the sanctuary was obscured. I squinted and leaned in. Rather than recount the details now, Father Daniel explained, he would include an account of the theft in the bulletin. But I was watching from a distance, with no bulletin or fellow parishioners with whom to compare notes after Mass. I closed my laptop, feeling gutted and alone.

From the Latin *tabernaculum*, meaning tent, a tabernacle is a dwelling place. It is the term given to the sanctuary of the Ark of the



What we claim to believe—or not believe—is often at odds with how we behave. 🔥

Covenant carried by the Israelites during the exodus and a word often used in the naming of Mormon and evangelical Protestant churches. But for Catholics, the tabernacle is the ornamental vessel where the Blessed Sacrament is kept outside of Mass. This last point matters most because when we show reverence toward the tabernacle, we do not honor the gilded receptacle but its contents, that is, the consecrated host.

I have bowed and genuflected toward the tabernacle at Corpus Christi my whole life. Located in the northeast quadrant of Rochester, N.Y., the parish served European immigrants and the city's growing upper crust in its heyday. But by the time I attended in the 1970s and '80s, the city was decimated by suburbanization and white flight, and the parish became home to some of the poorest families in the state, mine included. Today, nearly half of Rochester's children still live in poverty; in national rankings of cities with more than 100,000 people, only neighboring Syracuse has a higher rate.

My family's neighborhood was inhabited largely by Puerto Rican, Black and poor white families without the option of flight. Single mothers like mine could often be spotted leading their children on the walk down East Main Street to church. Mass was the sweet spot in our week and church one of the rare places with tenderness on open display. The same neighbors and families who struggled or fought during the week were softened by the Sign of Peace and the Agnus Dei. No face ever looked so open as those in the Communion line. Tired mothers, rebellious teens and people so old they could barely unfold their bodies from their kneelers rose and approached the altar with such rever-

ence they appeared to be in love. The parish continued to change over the years, somehow managing to survive the various mergers, consolidations and upheavals.

Now that Corpus Christi's tabernacle had been stolen, it seemed to me that, along with it, the reverence for the community and the neighborhood had been ripped away. I was so dispirited, I began to skip Mass by livestream and in person. I was surprised by how much I cared. Without its tabernacle, the church seemed no more than a collection of stained glass and old bricks. Without its tabernacle, what exactly was the point?

Tabernacles are rarely stolen, but such thefts do occur. In the past few years, tabernacles have been lifted from churches in Denver, Tacoma, Houston and Boone, N.C. In 2019, a fisherman from Sturgeon Falls, Ontario, found a tabernacle at the bottom of Lake Nipissing, 17 years after it was stolen from the Église de Sainte-Thérèse-d'Avila in nearby Cache Bay. Affected communities range widely in terms of geography and constituency (from African American to Latinx to Southern Anglo and French Canadian), but the one consistency is the devastation reported by parishioners and clergy alike. Devastation may sound a tad dramatic, but I assure you the word is apt.

I assumed the worst—that the vessel had been pulled apart and sold as scrap metal, the ciborium had been melted down or hawked, the consecrated hosts were dumped somewhere, defiled and gone forever. It took weeks to work up the nerve to call the rectory for details. When I finally did, I discovered that the tabernacle had been recovered the same night it was stolen. Abandoned near an unused side exit, the metal door was broken but the gold vessels and Blessed Sacrament were undisturbed. The thief had simply left it and walked away. It turns out that the tabernacle whose loss I had been mourning for over a month had never left the church.

I was relieved but could not shake how upset I had been, so I met with the pastor. Father Daniel was preparing to celebrate the weekly Thursday evening Spanish Mass the night the tabernacle was stolen and described the feeling when the theft was discovered. The first woman to approach the tabernacle to pray upon arrival in church noticed its absence immediately. Parishioners cried and said rosaries. And though their prayers were answered and the vessel was found by police that same night, Father Daniel described the ordeal as the most bitter of his priesthood.

After discussing the details and comparing the range and extent of our reactions, our conversation arrived at the place where any extended conversation about a Cath-

olic tabernacle must: the Eucharist and the real presence. You would think that someone so torn up over a missing tabernacle would have clear thoughts on both, but that was not the case. While I appreciate the beauty and reverence of holy Communion, I had never been able to make sense of transubstantiation. Even as a child, I did not fully grasp the focus on the consecrated hosts and the tabernacle, because what little I understood about God told me he was everywhere.

When I brought up the Pew survey in 2019 that reported only a third of U.S. Catholics believe in the real presence, Father Daniel smiled and shook his head.

“Most of the time we don’t realize where our affections lie.”

“That’s true,” I said, thinking of how grumpy I can be to my husband before morning coffee and how quickly I had corrected that habit during a recent health scare. I love my husband but did not remember to treasure him until I thought he might be sick. On one level, this is the stuff of refrigerator magnets and Joni Mitchell songs, but Father Daniel was hinting at something larger and more important still.

We humans are complicated creatures. What we claim to believe—or not believe—is often at odds with how we behave. This makes some sense, especially when you consider that the greatest moments of our lives are often not sifted through the head. We do not think love; we feel it. We do not describe devotion so much as act it out. Partaking in the Eucharist is likewise not a cerebral event. In the Eastern Church, the consecrated hosts are called the Holy Mysteries. Trying to explain a holy mystery is like trying to catch a butterfly with a broken net.

I am not sure how I would have answered Pew’s question about transubstantiation back in February of 2019. It is possible I would have agreed with seven in 10 Catholics that the bread and wine are symbols of Jesus Christ rather than the actual body and blood. It took the theft of our tabernacle for me to comprehend the sanctity of its contents and, even then, my comprehension was not full understanding but rather a feeling. If you want to gauge a Catholic’s relationship to the real presence more accurately, ask them to imagine their tabernacle carted away in the night. Have them close their eyes and picture their sanctuary without its beating heart. The profound sense of loss I suspect most would feel unites us beyond the particulars of geography, race or politics and connects us in the place beyond words.

Corpus Christi is the name of my parish, but I have

also come to understand it as the core of my faith. God offering himself again and again in the most ordinary of elements is the foundation from which all else springs. The body of Christ does not dwell exclusively in the tabernacle, but because he is real and present there, I better recognize him everywhere.

Sonja Livingston divides her time between Rochester, N.Y., and Richmond, Va., where she is an associate professor of English at Virginia Commonwealth University. Her latest book is *The Virgin of Prince Street: Expeditions Into Devotion*.

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Revelation and Healing: A Father and Son Reunion

recounts the author’s slow journey from an adoption that left him longing for his biological mother and wondering about his biological father. 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 therapies that brought him healing, therapies helpful not only to adoptees but to all who need healing from emotional suffering and losses of all kinds. With filial admiration, the author traces the life of his beloved father, Lionel Durand, friends with de Gaulle and Picasso, an internationally acclaimed newsmen and journalist, who fought in the French Resistance during World War II, twice imprisoned, twice escaped, and whose struggles for peace and justice mirror those of our own day. Welcome to this reading journey and its wondrous surprises.

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Cover painting by Lionel Durand



Lionel Durand broadcasting for Voice of America



In Every Age

By John Dougherty

My name has been in my family for seven generations. Here's what I hope it means for the next.

I have always known what I would name my first son.

My name is John James Dougherty VII. I am part of an unbroken chain of Johns, going back centuries, crossing oceans. I was thrilled to learn this as a child. It made me feel like I was part of a long, epic story. Not only that, but it was a tradition I would be able to pass along to the next generation. Whenever my family joked about what I would be like as a parent (or when I received some variation of the “Someday, when you’re a parent...” lecture), they always referred to my hypothetical future child as “John the Eighth.” While I was dating the woman who would become my wife, she picked up on this and started referring to him as “El Ocho.”

Long before he was born, he had a part in this story.

Then, finally, in December 2020, John James Dougherty VIII came into the world. After years of speculation, he was real, not just an idea or a hope. Passing on the name

was such a given throughout my life that it was not until after he was born that I really thought about what our family’s naming tradition meant to me, and what I hope it means to him.

I should say that, while the name remains constant, the people who held it have been very different. John James Dougherty the first was born in Ireland in 1830 and grew up during the potato famine. Our family were farmers in County Donegal on the Inishowen Peninsula, the traditional home of the Clann O’Dochartaigh. He passed the name to his son. We can tell that John James II considered the name meaningful, because when his eldest son (John James III) died at a young age, he gave the name to his third son, my great-grandfather.

John IV, called “Red John” by friends and family, was the one who came to the United States in search of new opportunities. He settled in the dense immigrant neigh-

borhoods of south Philadelphia, where he tried his hand at various jobs, including a chauffeur service for dockworkers and operating a speakeasy out of the basement of his home on Federal Street during Prohibition. When the Depression hit, things were so bad in America that my family moved back to Ireland to work the farm.

They returned when my grandfather, John V, was 12, having already learned most of his high school algebra in two years. My great-grandfather sent him to St. Joseph's Prep, a Jesuit high school in Philadelphia, because he believed their acceptance letter was better written than those from the other schools. So began my family's affection for the Jesuits. My grandfather served on a submarine in the Pacific (the U.S.S. Flying Fish) during World War II and attended Villanova University on the G.I. Bill, launching a career as an electrical engineer. The family moved to Northeast Philadelphia, where my father—John VI—and his six siblings grew up.

My dad also attended St. Joseph's Prep and Villanova and followed in Grandpop's footsteps to become an electrical engineer. He worked for General Electric for 40 years. He is also an inventor and holds 50 patents; as a kid, I would find notepads covered in sketches of circuits—new ideas coming to life.

And then there is me. My Jesuit education took me in a different direction, and I am now a campus minister at another Jesuit high school, father to two children and—in my very limited free time—I write for publications like **America**. This long line of John James Doughertys have led very different lives. Still, I feel a sort of kinship with all of them through our shared name.

I do not know why the first John James passed down his name or why the second kept it going. Maybe it was a desire for a sort of immortality, a sense of pride or legacy. Maybe it was a more personal reason I could never guess. My decision to give the name to my own son was born of a desire to keep this family story going. I did not want it to end with me.

I realize that this tradition might sound silly to some. And I also know that both my son and my daughter, no matter their names, will carry on the family story. Even at their young ages, they already are a part of it.

With a tradition as long-lived as this one, I felt a certain responsibility to keep it alive. But my choice was about surrender as much as it was about continuity. This became clearer to me after Johnny's birth. When we gave him the name, I also relinquished some of my control over it. I gave

up my right to have the final say on what being John James Dougherty means. Now he can do what he pleases with it.

Being a part of this family legacy has been deeply humbling. I am reminded that I am not the beginning nor the culmination of this story, simply one part of a larger tradition. I have put my own spin on it, before stepping aside to let the next John James Dougherty take center stage. The tradition does not cement us in our identity but rather helps us understand that our lives are never just our own. It reminds me of St. Ignatius' *Suscipe* prayer ("Take, Lord, and receive, all my liberty..."), and the idea that the truest act of love is giving. I give the tradition over to my son, to keep it or let go of it.

I hope I teach my son important lessons and help him to grow into a good person. But it is inevitable that his experience as John James Dougherty will be radically different from mine. I have to give him the same freedom I had to take this name, this tradition, and give it personal meaning. Maybe it will not mean anything to him, and he will have no desire to pass it along. That is the risk and beauty of handing over something precious.

My son is too young now to understand any of this. He cannot even say his name yet. Still, I think about how I will explain this tradition to him when he is old enough. I will tell him it is a reminder of our shared history, of the journeys our family undertook, the hardships we faced, the homes we left behind and discovered. And it is a way of setting the stakes for our work in the present and giving a face to the future.

Our shared name is a constant nod to the generations that I hope will follow, a reminder that the work I do today is not on behalf of some shapeless ideal of a better world, but for the world that my children will grow up in, and their children, and their children. John James Dougherty X is only a hypothetical, but the choices I make now will shape the sort of world he may be born into.

I'll probably have to simplify it a little; that seems like a lot to put on a child. I am a writer, so maybe I will just use a metaphor. This tradition, I could tell him, is a book. Each generation turns to a fresh page. Your name, passed down through the years, is one aspect of your life. It is a pen that may help prompt you to tell your own story. It's in your hand now. I can't wait to see what you write.

John Dougherty is the director of campus ministry at Saint Peter's Prep in Jersey City, N.J.



Loyola High School | Montreal

‘Good Teaching Is Good Teaching for All’

A Jesuit high school in Montreal goes co-ed

By Sarah Vincent

For the past 125 years, Loyola High School in Montreal has been an all-male Jesuit school. But following a bold announcement that the high school will be going coed, that is about to change. To undertake its new mission to educate men, and now women, for others, Loyola will soon be undergoing sizable shifts.

Loyola is the only all-male Catholic school in Montreal and the only Jesuit school in all of Quebec. It is no secret that single-sex educational institutions have been disappearing in recent years; financial struggles and a decline in the number of vocations to religious orders have both contributed to the closing of all-girls and all-boys schools. An accelerating trend of rapid secularization, particularly noticeable in Quebec, only intensifies these effects. But

Loyola’s shift to coeducation isn’t a failing or a folding to difficult circumstances, school officials say—it is an intentional transformation, driven by a desire to make Jesuit education more accessible to students. “To open the doors to a Jesuit Catholic school for as many students as we can in the Montreal area is really important to us,” says Annie Beland, vice principal of academics for the junior school and newly appointed vice principal of coeducation.

Quebec’s educational system is unique, even among other provinces in Canada. Although some of Loyola’s classes are taught in French and most students leave “functionally bilingual,” according to school leaders, Loyola is considered an English-language school. Because of Quebec’s unique system and Francophone culture, to attend

Loyola High School Montreal will begin admitting female students in 2023.

English institutions like Loyola, students first need a government certificate of permission. In trying to make Jesuit education easier to access, this is an obstacle that has been hard for the school to mitigate. The solution? Make Loyola more accessible in a different way: by going coed. Although the change does not remove the need for governmental certification, it now will welcome every student who has it, broadening the reach of Jesuit education in the province.

The shift has not been without its controversy. A petition circulating online was signed by nearly 360 people lamenting the loss of the unique atmosphere of Loyola as an all-male school. But Andres Canella, head of the social studies department and both a Loyola alum and a parent himself, does not see it that way. “[With] any change, particularly to a longstanding institution like Loyola, there’s going to be hesitation,” he admits. But “as an alumnus myself, you look back and you say, ‘You know, what was it that made up my experience at Loyola? Was it the fact that it was just boys, [or] was it the fact that it was Jesuit?’”

Ultimately, he feels the importance of his time at Loyola can be found in the values it instilled in him, not just the single-sex education. He says that other parents and families feel similarly and have long been asking Loyola to accept their daughters alongside their sons, so that both can receive a quality Jesuit education.

“The more diversity of any kind you add to an environment, I would argue it makes you a more empathetic and compassionate person. Being able to befriend people of all kinds makes you understand the situations people are in,” Mr. Canella says. He is excited for the shift and hopes that his two sons will one day attend Loyola. With coeducation, “It’s not about what gender you are. You’re a Loyola student now. It kind of takes that out of the equation.”

Vice Principal Beland agrees. Like Mr. Canella, she enjoyed her own time in single-sex education as a high school student. But despite that, she still feels it is time for Loyola to diversify. “My experience was really, really positive. But I think an environment that mirrors what the world actually is is really important in 2022,” she says. “[As a student,] would I have benefitted from having boys at the school? Absolutely, 100 percent.”

In Quebec, high school runs for five years, from seventh to eleventh grade. (Following graduation is a two-year program between high school and university called *cegep*, from the French *collège d’enseignement général et professionnel*, “general and vocational college.”) Accordingly, Loyola’s first coed class will be admitted to their seventh grade for the 2023-24 school year. This allows the upper

grades to remain all-male, respecting that those parents and students chose to enroll in Loyola while it was a single-sex school.

Preparations for becoming coed are already underway. Focus groups convened in September, meeting throughout the year to iron out the details of everything from uniforms to sports teams. Construction will start this spring to retrofit bathrooms and locker rooms. The next open house in September 2022 will be open to all prospective students, male and female. And school-wide discussions are being held around teaching pedagogy and student thoughts about coeducation, preparing the students who will be student body leaders when the first coed class arrives.

Coeducation also brings some financial benefits. Although diversity and inclusion were driving factors in the decision to go coed, school leaders say, a boosted enrollment keeps tuition affordable for students while also helping the school thrive. It makes Jesuit education more accessible in more than one way, both opening the doors to girls and making sure that rising costs do not price out lower-income students. The school’s financial aid program helps in that regard as well.

Although the school is changing, “What makes Loyola special is not the fact that it’s an all-boys school. What makes Loyola special is its Jesuit Catholic identity and its values,” Ms. Beland says. “Opening our doors to all genders is something that we feel is going to enhance our community. And then it allows for the mission of being men and women for and with others.” It is a dramatic shift, and one that will take time and careful consideration to do right. But ultimately, in the shift to go coed, Ms. Beland says: “Good teaching is good teaching for all.”

Sarah Vincent is a Joseph A. O’Hare fellow at America.



JESUIT SCHOOL SPOTLIGHT

Jesuit School Spotlight is a monthly feature focusing on Jesuit middle and secondary schools. It is underwritten in part by Jesuit high schools of the USA East Province of the Society of Jesus.

Nick Cave and the Practice of Spiritual Direction

By Kaya Oakes

The preacher wears black and sits at a grand piano. Nick Cave is lithe and elegant in motion, reaching skyward often in performance, as if trying to grasp air. But Cave, whose music has long followed in the tradition of God-haunted songwriters like Johnny Cash, Leonard Cohen and Bob Dylan, has recently turned from a performer who resembles a preacher into something else. For hundreds of thousands who follow his music and his newsletter, *The Red Hand Files*, Nick Cave has become their pastor.

Over the course of his 40-year career, Cave went to hell via heroin addiction, sobered up and got married, only to be sent back to hell again in 2015 when his teenage son, Arthur, half of a set of twins, fell off a cliff to his death. Soon after, Cave told a journalist that grief had transformed him and the world he lived in. “I have turned a corner,” he said, “and wandered onto a landscape that is open and vast.”

Cave’s lyrics have long used imagery from the Bible. He has returned again and again to the story of Jesus as a central source. But Cave has also long insisted he is not a practicing Christian. Born in 1957 and raised in the Anglican Church in Australia, Cave grew up singing in the church choir in his boyhood home of Wangarratta, an isolated rural town. He later described the Anglican church of his youth as “the decaf of worship.” Teen-

age rebellion and the death of his father when Cave was 19 led him to put a greater distance between himself and the Anglican religion of his childhood, whose God he once described as “remote, alien, and uncertain.”

Art school, a move to London and a stint in an artsy punk band called *The Birthday Party* carried Cave into the mid 1980s, when he co-founded *The Bad Seeds*, the band he still plays with today. Particularly crucial to his music is his 30-year songwriting and film scoring partnership with multi-instrumentalist Warren Ellis, a dynamic presence onstage but by all accounts a grounding and stable one in the studio.

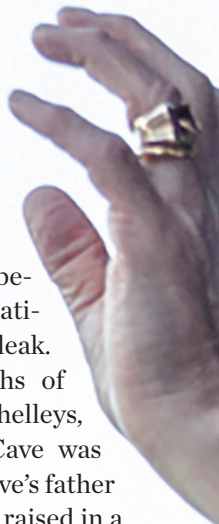
Before he found security with his wife of more than 20 years, Susie, Cave’s addiction made him so angry and paranoid he once attacked a journalist sent to interview him. A curdled romance with the songwriter PJ Harvey exacerbated his addiction, which he eventually kicked through *Narcotics Anonymous*. He had a reputation as a terror, and this was one of the reasons his fans loved him. In a brief scene from Wim Wenders’s 1987 movie, “*Wings of Desire*,” Cave plays a tormented rock star, a piece of type-casting done to the extreme.

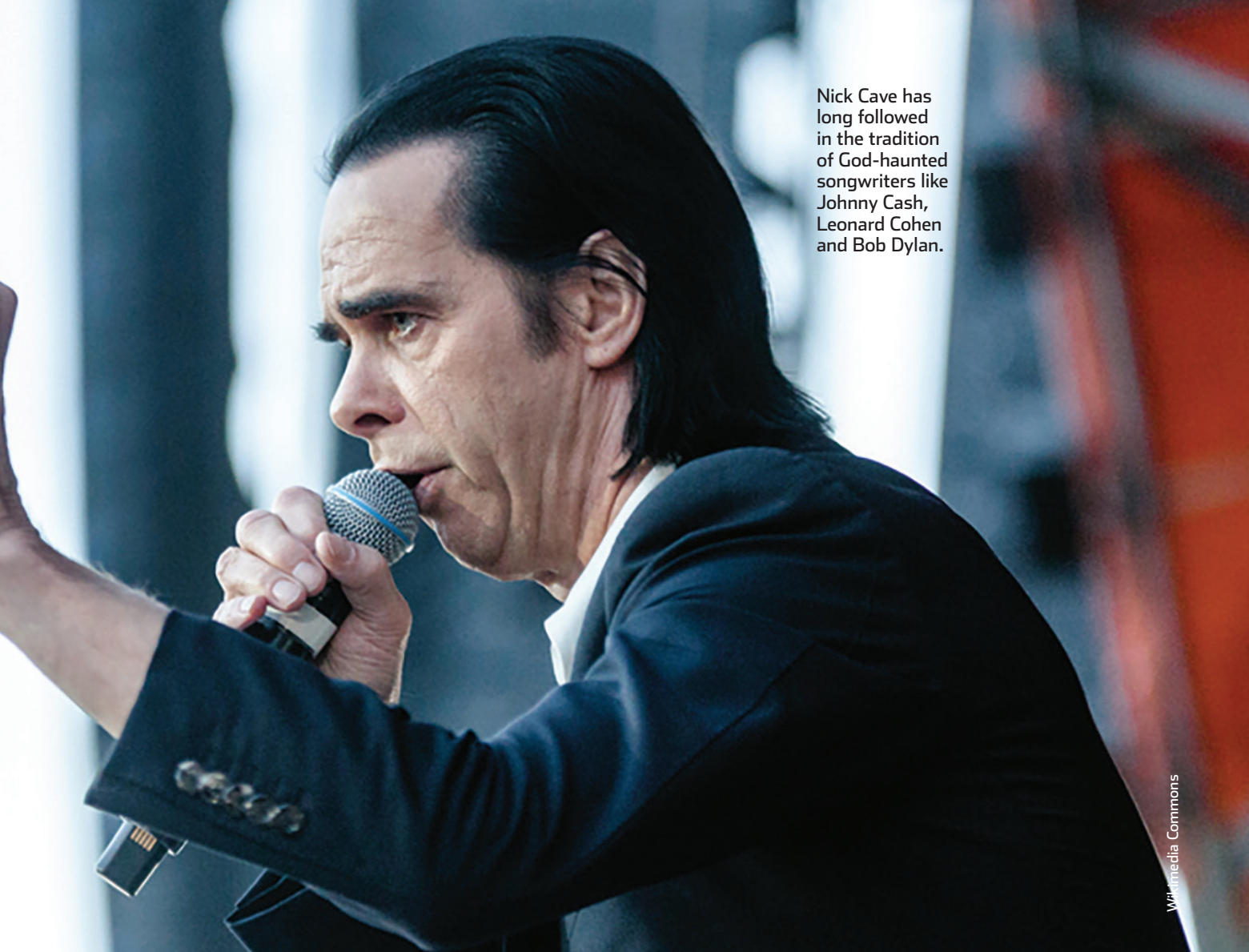
But the worse the addiction got, the better the songs got, too. Cave was long called a goth, not just because of his black wardrobe and slicked-back

crown of black hair, or because his music was thematically creepy, violent and bleak. But like the original goths of Romantic literature, the Shelleys, Lord Byron and Keats, Cave was creating compelling art. Cave’s father taught English, and he was raised in a home that valued literature. Yet even in the era when he wrote an entire album called “*Murder Ballads*,” the book Cave was most drawn to for inspiration, over and over, was the Bible.

A surprised journalist sent to interview Cave described his copy of the Bible as covered in detailed marginal notes and scrawled with questions. Cave’s knowledge of the Bible is so deep he was asked to write the introduction for an edition of the Gospel of Mark in 1988. It’s still available online, and is a remarkable document. Cave begins by explaining that his early infatuation with the vengeful God of the Hebrew Bible gave way to an attraction to the Jesus of Mark’s Gospel because he had matured and was ready for something different. But Cave’s Jesus was no less tame than Cave himself.

“Mark’s Gospel,” Cave writes, “is a clatter of bones, so raw, nervy and lean on information that the narrative aches with the melancholy of absence.” Mark’s telling of Christ’s story appealed to Cave because of its visceral nature. That Gospel also revealed for Cave the hypocrisy of those in his





Nick Cave has long followed in the tradition of God-haunted songwriters like Johnny Cash, Leonard Cohen and Bob Dylan.

Wikimedia Commons

own upbringing who depicted Jesus as a kind of milquetoast cipher, stripping him of his rage and humanity. “Christ, it seemed to me,” Cave writes, “was the victim of humanity’s lack of imagination, was hammered to the cross with the nails of creative vapidness.”

Mark’s Gospel restored Jesus to Nick Cave, but it did not make him a believer in the traditional sense: a person who attends church, follows a creed, tithes and looks to the church for community. In 2010 he told the musician Jarvis Cocker that he believes in God “in spite of religion, not because of it.” None of the tragedies Cave experienced returned him to re-

ligion: not his father’s death, not his addiction, not even the death of his son Arthur.

In the 2016 documentary “One More Time With Feeling,” Cave sleepwalks through the composition and recording of his first album after Arthur’s death, “The Skeleton Tree.” Christian statuary and art is scattered around his house, but there is little talk of religion in the mumbling and confused dialogue. Religion would come a few years later, when the world knocked again and Cave was finally ready to answer.

Begun in 2018, *The Red Hand Files* was Cave’s attempt to wrestle

publicly with some of the questions about grief and creativity fans had privately been writing to him about since Arthur’s death. Particularly, Cave and his wife had received letter after letter from bereaved parents who had also lost a child, and Cave wanted to give something in return.

In the very first edition, in response to a question about how his writing had changed since Arthur’s death, Cave wrote that returning to performing, he felt “very acutely that a sense of suffering was the connective tissue that held us all together.” When a fan wrote a few months later about losing several of her own family members and asked

Over and over, the book that Cave was most drawn to for inspiration was the Bible. ●●

if Cave felt Arthur was still present to him, Cave replied that Arthur often appeared in Susie's dreams and in his own imagination, which helped him to feel "our stunned imaginations awakening after the calamity," and that understanding their son's presence was still with them enabled them to feel "ghostly hands that draw us back to the world from which they were jettisoned; better now and unimaginably changed." Sometimes *The Red Hand Files* is profound, at other times it showcases Cave's wicked sense of humor, but it is always very human.

One of the last times I went to hear live music before Covid-19 shut down the world was late in 2019, when Cave did a *Red Hand Files* tour that swung through San Francisco. Davies Symphony Hall, a cavernous spiral of light, was sold out, but the crowds of Cave fans were not the usual vanishing class of old San Francisco money that haunts the symphony, the ghosts of capitalism past. Instead, people like me who had grown up with Cave, no longer young punks or goths but still clinging to cool in our thick-rimmed eyeglasses and customary suits of solemn black, wove our way into the symphony hall.

For nearly three hours, Cave sat alone, playing the piano and singing, and in between songs, he answered questions from the audience—everything from questions about life and art and belief to whether or not he was a vegetarian (he's not). One young

woman asked about his Christian faith, and Cave replied that while he is dependent on Christ as an idea and as inspiration, he is emphatically not a Christian, primarily because the institutions of Christianity have historically been so wasteful and so corrupt.

I left buoyed by the knowledge that we can, in fact, grow up along with artists we admire as long as they manage to stay alive, but also thinking there was something all of this reminded me of, from the letters to the way Cave interacted with his fans onstage, a cross between the old-timey preacher he resembled in his perfectly tailored black suit and the erudite, thoughtful person he reveals himself to be when he is speaking. So I sent some of the newsletters to a Jesuit friend with a question: "Is this a new kind of spiritual direction?"

Spiritual direction, in which the director listens to the longings and doubts and sufferings and joys of the seeker and attempts to help them find a way to direct those thoughts and feelings toward their relationship with God, is something Nick Cave himself might not have experienced in his Anglican childhood, but it did feel like something he was cultivating, even in a secular setting. The show, even in an upper-crust concert hall, felt like entering into an act of communion.

My Jesuit friend confirmed this interpretation, and to this day, we often swap *Red Hand Files* newsletters, inspiration for preaching and teaching and

writing and a way to keep us in communion with one another. But I have also shared Cave's words with my nonreligious musician spouse, with friends who would never darken a church door, with people who find institutional religion just as hypocritical and problematic as it can often be. And each of them has found some value in his advice, jokes or reflections on creativity.

It is because Cave does not push doctrine or even always sound sure about the truth of the answers he is giving. Like a good pastor, his purpose as an artist and in his newsletter is to accompany people, to listen to their longings and griefs and to do his best to respond. The thirst for that, in our world today, is deep.

Our secular age still needs preachers, but even more, it needs pastors. A choirboy from Wangaratta who stuck needles in his arms in the search for God and finally found himself alive in the wake of unimaginable loss, still able to say his life "is dominated by the notion of God, whether it is in His presence or His absence," may be the only kind of preacher who can cut through the noise of our burning and crumbling world.

Rock stars do not always age gracefully. Maybe God's grace, in whatever form it takes, can allow them to minister to us if they do survive. For Cave, as for so many of us, "God is a work in progress," and as we emerge stumbling and wounded from the pandemic and all that it has done to us, we might even be lucky, along with Cave, to meet a God who allows us to grow old together.

Kaya Oakes, a contributing writer for America, teaches writing at the University of California, Berkeley. Her fifth book, The Defiant Middle, was released in the fall of 2021.

Spiritual Summer Retreats at The Center at Mariandale, 2022

June 2022

The Roots of Racism in the Psyche and Our Response to this Darkness
Saturday, June 11 with Don Bisson, FMS and Boreta A. Singleton

Merton: My Soul Friend
Sunday, June 12 with Doug Lory

Wellness Weekend: Body, Mind and Spirit
Starts Wednesday, June 22 with Anne Kertz Kernion

Refreshing Summer Solitude: A Silent Directed 5-Day Retreat
Starts June 26 with Sister Nancy Erts. OP, Sister Maureen McMahon, RDC, and Judith Schiavo

July 2022

Journey of the Universe: Educators Retreat
Starts Thursday, July 7 with Sam King

Trinity and Community: The Mysticism of Creation Retreat
Starts Sunday, July 17 with Sister Pat Connick, OP

Rest & Renewal for Young Adults (20s & 30s)
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Poetry that speaks the unspeakable

By Joe Hoover

How do you address something so disturbing, so brutal, but at the same time elusive and diffuse as a war? Especially such a brazen act as Russia's invasion of Ukraine. What are the options? Taking up a weapon, or marching in a public square, or praying, or frantically drawing wild circles in the air; resorting to sheer silence; or, if you are a writer, crafting a poem.

The 2022 Foley poetry contest brought in more than 600 poems this year, from all over the world. They were about everything and anything: John the Baptist, the Wando River, chocolate éclairs, difficult breakups, lamp posts, the Annunciation, a Trojan horse in a Blockbuster parking lot, John Coltrane, the Year of the Tiger, a gas station, the Madonna of the Goldfinch on a sewing box lid and everything in between.

As the contest stretched into March, more and more poems came in about the ongoing nightmare-tragedy in Eastern Europe. We regularly receive submissions about current events and the world's troubles, but these felt especially urgent and poignant. Below are fragments of poems that, while not contest finalists, nonetheless provide one more way for **America** to shine a light on the ongoing horror in Ukraine.

From Peter Cline's "Pecherska Molytva":

*We are the midge in monster's mouth
Chewed up and spit out hastily.
But He protects his little ones
And exposes villainy.
Let not the hatred and the fear
Fill us with dreams of bloody deeds
For agents of our destruction.*

"Four Freedoms," by Carolyn Oliver, reflects on the photograph, which has become one of the war's iconic images, of a family killed by a Russian bomb attempting to evacuate across a bridge over the Irpin River:

*Today it does not take so long to make a picture speak:
These four could be sleeping on the street:*

*a woman, two children, and a man alone
bleeding, soldiers trying to save him,*

*him alone left to save after the shell blast.
You and I know their effort will fail...*

From "Crossing" by Deborah Shore:

*In my dreams, young poets from Ukraine
give readings about the war.
They must have been among the littlest
when they came, for no accent remains.
One shares that she'd prayed to die
if both her parents did,
but lived. She says it plain,
without regret for her own ending.*

In his poem "In Time of War" (from a country on Vladimir Putin's hit list), Donald Adamson looks at the very act of looking at the war:

*As the war draws closer with pictures
of a little girl killed, a mother wailing,
a mud-stained rescuer digging through rubble
I chide myself that I do not weep within,
that my outrage is helpless, numbed, not a dam bursting
behind the skull...*

From "Fermenting Evil of War in Ukraine" by Goran Gatalica:

*they killed my brother
near the Zaporizhzhya nuclear plant
like predators
my great brother was brave
his body was found in the mud
with crucifix on his chest
my only brother
my only brother...*

While it did not address the war in Ukraine, the winning poem in this year's contest, "In Copenhagen," by Lisa Mullenneaux, covers all-too familiar territory. It is a searing piece of writing whose gifts do not come gently. Runners-up, to be published in subsequent issues, are "The Fall," by Chiwenite Onyekwelu (also a Foley runner-up in 2020), "Discernment of Spirits," by Mia Grogan, and "Lord of Hope & Misery," by Diane Glancy.

A word of thanks to our O'Hare fellow Sarah Vincent and last year's Foley prize-winner, Preeti Vangani, for joining me as contest judges. We encourage the poets among us, and the non-poets, to keep writing. In a poem, even cursing the darkness can be the lighting of a candle.

Joe Hoover, S.J., is **America's** poetry editor.

2022 Foley Poetry Prize

In Copenhagen

By Lisa Mullenneaux

You shall leave behind all you love most,
and that shall be the arrow
the bow of exile shoots first.

*Tu lascerai ogni cosa diletta
piu caramente; e questo e quello strale
che l'arco de lo essilio pria saetta.*

Dante, *Paradiso*, canto XVII, lines 55-57

“Do you see me?” Adie asks me,
“because no one else does.”
We exist only for each other,
Syria to Italy to Denmark, where
we can never get warm enough
in our semi-heated rooms—sink,
shared toilet in the hallway,
meals an extra 500 kroner a week.

Soon I will be fish-belly white
like my grandfather in Damascus, who
became thinner and paler until
his lips were cracks, his skin icy,
his scalp hairless, and his wrists
like a gull’s broken wings.

I had your picture in my wallet,
Fatim. Seeing it reminded me
of our old life, but they took it
in Lampedusa. I begged them:
“Keep the money. Just give me
the photos of my family.”

One day I will return to that place
and find what they took.
There was no need:
we had already lost so much.
Jamal didn’t make the crossing.

Soaked with seawater and gasoline,
his skin peeled off, his screams
nearly as loud as the planes
bringing tourists to the beach.

Lisa Mullenneaux’s poems and essays appear in *AGNI*, *Ploughshares*, *The New England Review* and elsewhere. She is the author of the critical study *Naples’ Little Women: The Fiction of Elena Ferrante* and has taught research writing for the University of Maryland’s Global Campus since 2015.

Abolition Activists

William H. Johnson/Smithsonian American Art Museum

Harriet Tubman prayed fervently that her enslavers, and her country, would change their ways.

Once-revered figures from Christopher Columbus to Abraham Lincoln are under intense historical scrutiny these days as we engage in a national discussion about how to acknowledge the ways past words and deeds have shaped the deeply flawed world we live in. This process can be divisive and painful, but it has also vindicated some of history's more farsighted figures, such as the abolitionists who opposed slavery before the bloodletting of the U.S. Civil War.

Recent works like the TV series "The Good Lord Bird" and "The Underground Railroad," as well as books like Bruce Levine's biography of Thaddeus Stevens and David S. Reynolds's massive cultural history, *Abe: Abraham Lincoln in His Times*, offer extended portraits of these activists, who ended up on the right side of history.

Add Dorothy Wickenden's inspiring *The Agitators* to this list.

In this study of (to use Wicken-

den's subtitle) "Three Friends Who Fought for Abolition and Women's Rights," the executive editor of *The New Yorker* explores 19th-century intersections of class, racism and patriarchy through the lives of the escaped slave Harriet Tubman and the activists Martha Wright and Frances Seward. The latter two "transform[ed] themselves from conventional homemakers into insurgents," according to Wickenden, while Tubman "repeatedly risked her life...to guide some 70 enslaved people" to freedom.

Harriet Tubman, Wickenden writes, lived her life expressing "how it was to be enslaved, and...what I did about it." Coming of age on a Maryland plantation, Tubman later wrote that she often spoke to God "as a man talketh with a friend," alternating between bafflement and rage, praying that her enslavers, and her country, would change their ways.

They didn't. And so, on the night of Sept. 17, 1849—with the aid of parents

who were familiar with the Underground Railroad—Tubman fled, beginning her life of fearless advocacy for African American men and women.

At the same time, Martha Wright—along with fellow organizers like Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott—was assessing the impact of the trailblazing convention for women's rights in Seneca Falls, N.Y., in July 1848. Most of the 300 attendees "had long been abolitionists" as well as "supporters of women's rights," Wickenden notes.

Then there was Frances Seward, who had just moved with her two children to Washington, D.C., where her Whig husband was launching one of the more illustrious political careers of the mid-19th century. "Members from the South," Wickenden writes, "equated [U.S. Senator William Seward's] position on slavery with that of 'ultra' abolitionists." Frances Seward was arguably even more vociferous in her opposition to slavery—and the family paid a price.

The Agitators
Three Friends Who Fought for Abolition and Women's Rights
By Dorothy Wickenden
Scribner
400p \$30

She lived in fear for her husband's life (a \$500 bounty was placed on William's head), and not one but two family dogs were poisoned.

The Agitators is most compelling as Wickenden guides readers through the bloody, tumultuous 1850s. In March 1854, the same year many Whigs and abolitionists joined the new, anti-slavery Republican Party, newspapers were filled with headlines about "Bleeding Kansas." Two years later, "one of Frances' dearest friends," Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts, gave a long anti-slavery speech and was promptly beaten unconscious on the Senate floor by Congressman Preston Brooks of South Carolina.

During these volatile years, Wright and Seward were neighbors in upstate Auburn, N.Y. Then Tubman—though still a fugitive slave—purchased a nearby home from the Swards, which explains why present-day visitors to Auburn's Fort Hill Cemetery can find, "almost hidden in the landscape," the graves of all three of these trailblazers. Women "with no evident power to change anything" nevertheless became, in Wickenden's impressive telling, "co-conspirators and intimate friends—protagonists in...the second American revolution."

Unfortunately, once it became clear that suffrage and related rights for Black men, but not women, would be prioritized after the Civil War, this once-formidable equal rights coalition started to break down. Frustrated feminists like Elizabeth Cady Stanton contrasted the "pauperism, ignorance, and degradation" of former slaves

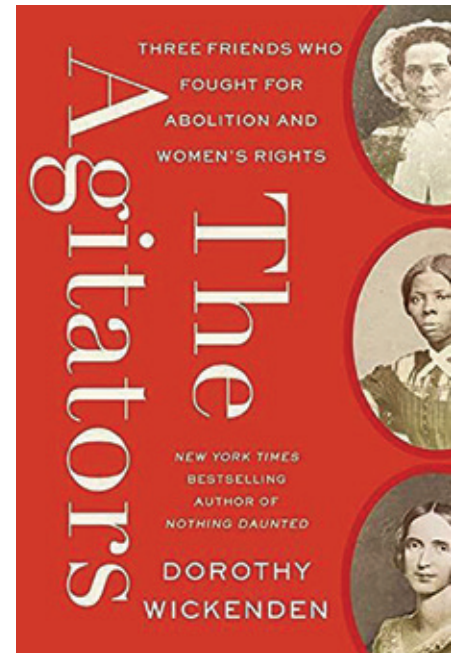
with the "wealth, education, and refinement" of white women.

In what Wickenden calls a "scorching rebuttal," the longtime ally Frederick Douglass said: "When women, because they are women, are hunted down through the streets... when their children are torn from their arms and their brains dashed out upon the pavement...then they will have an urgency to obtain the ballot equal to our own."

All of this lends Wickenden's book not just an air of tragedy, but also relevance for activists today. To what degree can—or should—discrete groups build coalitions? And what happens when they can't? Or don't? Or won't?

In the face of grave postwar disappointment, all three of Wickenden's protagonists nevertheless fought on. "We feel that at this hour," declared Wright at the founding of the new American Equal Rights Association in 1866, "our highest claims are as citizens, and not as women."

One major failing of *The Agitators* is that it is merely the latest work to steer clear of one crucial abolitionist tendency—hostility to another marginalized, dispossessed population, Catholic immigrants—that also had far-reaching consequences. During the 1850s, Northern hotbeds of Republican abolitionism, like Boston, Brooklyn and Philadelphia, were radically transformed by these new immigrants. But as Leslie Woodcock Tentler noted in her recent survey of American Catholics: "That popery and slavery were parallel systems of despotism was a favorite abolitionist trope." (The Swards, to their cred-



it, were quite sympathetic to immigrants, Wickenden notes.)

It is certainly another historical tragedy that poor European immigrants joined the pro-slavery Democratic Party, in a devil's bargain that granted them a few of the more modest privileges of "whiteness." The most gruesome illustration of their support of the Democrats' position was the 1863 Draft Riots, when, as Wickenden writes, "poor Irish and German immigrants" lashed out in racist (and anti-conscription, anti-Republican, anti-elite) violence.

But what exactly did Republicans offer immigrants as an alternative, other than hateful screeds about slums and nuns? This alignment with the Democratic Party as millions more immigrants poured into U.S. cities was central to American politics for at least a century, and (it could be argued) still influences a wide array of contemporary political and cultural conflicts.

Even as we take deep revisionist dives into America's past—and witness new spasms of nativism in the present—too many historians avoid the

complex consequences of yesterday's immigration. The New York Times recently ran an opinion column about the "real story" of the 1863 Draft Riots without a single reference to immigration, religion, nativism, poverty or party affiliation.

None of which detracts from the accomplishments of Dorothy Wickenden or her admirable "agitators." Without them and their activism, the "real story" of American justice and equality cannot be told.

Tom Deignan has written about history for *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post* and *The National Catholic Reporter*. He is working on a book about the United States during the Ellis Island years.

Finding Christ in the Other

Nearly 54 years after his untimely death, Thomas Merton continues to inspire and baffle. I do not mean that as a criticism; those responses to Merton simply reflect his complexity as a Trappist monk, priest and spiritual seeker. He constantly questioned himself, dared to admit his failings and wanted nothing less than to seek God and discover his authentic self.

In *Man of Dialogue: Thomas Merton's Catholic Vision*, Gregory K. Hillis, a theology professor at Bellarmine University in Louisville, Ky., tackles an argument that has long haunted Merton's legacy: that Merton some-

how was not a faithful-enough Catholic. Hillis deftly shows this to be a misguided belief, one that even prompted the U.S. bishops in 2006 to exclude Merton from the *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*, despite his being one of the best-known and most significant American Catholic thinkers of the 20th century.

Hillis picks up where Pope Francis left off in his 2015 address to the U.S. Congress, in which he singled out Merton and three others—Dorothy Day, Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King Jr.—as exemplary Americans. The pope called Merton "a man of prayer, a thinker who challenged the certitudes of his times and opened new horizons for souls and for the Church," as well as "a man of dialogue, a promoter of peace between peoples and religions."

Hillis puts flesh on the bones of that assessment. He draws from his extensive reading of Merton's famous and lesser-known writings; recordings of lectures Merton gave when he was novice director at the Abbey of Gethsemani, outside of Louisville, Ky.; and interviews with those who knew him to show how Merton's Catholic identity remained a constant thread within his personal spirituality. It comes through in Merton's love for the liturgy, reverence for the Eucharist and devotion to the Blessed Mother; also in his belief in the purpose of the priesthood and the value of monastic life and his constant yearning to deepen his prayer life and attain a closer union with God.

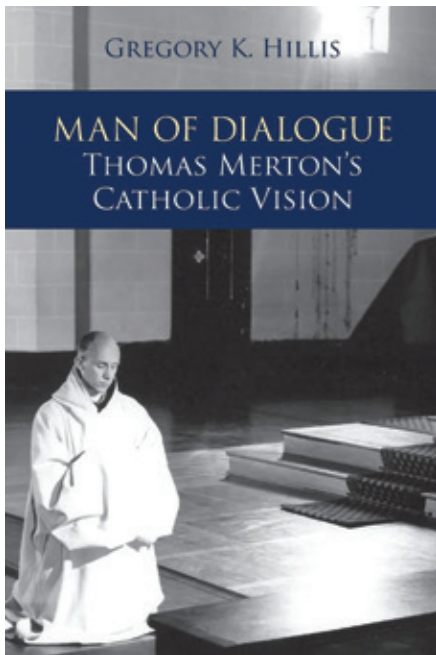
Some of the most fascinating sections of *Man of Dialogue* revolve around Merton's devotion to the Eucharist, a frequent theme in his writings. He often spoke of the Mass in

mystical terms, describing one experience "at sunrise when the light of the sun falls on the altar and powerfully lights up the mystery of the divine presence." To a Muslim friend, Merton wrote that the Mass is "the moment of the nearest presence of God in our lives." Often when confronted with inner turmoil (for instance, when he was considering whether to convert to Catholicism, discerning his vocation to the priesthood or, later, deciding whether to remain at Gethsemani or transfer to another monastery), he often sought answers before the Blessed Sacrament.

Some of the final entries in the journal of his trip to Asia refer to Masses he celebrated. In the very last entry, dated Dec. 8, 1968, he writes of his plans for celebrating Mass on the feast of the Immaculate Conception. Merton died two days later of what was determined to be an accidental electrocution, caused when he apparently touched a faulty fan wire as he was coming out of the shower in the cottage where he was staying outside of Bangkok.

Hillis connects Merton's reverence for the Eucharist, his vast knowledge of doctrine and his deep reading of the Gospels with his subsequent, often controversial writings on peace, non-violence and racism in America. Hillis points out that Merton's writings on the issues of his day were not driven by the secular peace movement of his time or any countercultural 1960s activism. Rather, they were "rooted principally in theological concerns."

On peace and nonviolence, Merton never identified as a pacifist. Unlike other prominent peace advocates such as his friends Dorothy Day and Eileen Egan (the co-founder of Pax



Man of Dialogue
 Thomas Merton's Catholic Vision
 By Gregory K. Hillis
 Liturgical Press
 320p \$24.95

Christi USA), Merton continued to accept Catholic teaching on just war. However, the atomic bombing of Japan during the Second World War and the subsequent nuclear arms race convinced him that no war could be justified in the age of nuclear weapons, given the certainty of widespread civilian deaths and unspeakable destruction.

As Hillis notes, Merton began to speak out publicly on this issue with "The Root of War Is Fear," an essay that first appeared in *The Catholic Worker* newspaper: "The duty of the Christian...is to strive with all his power and intelligence, with his faith, hope in Christ and love of God and man, to do the one task which God has imposed upon us in the world today,"

Merton wrote. "That task is to work for the total abolition of war."

Merton spoke out at a time when many Catholics—including bishops, as Hillis points out—supported the use of nuclear weapons even if deployed in a first strike against the Soviet Union. Merton wrote instead of "the law of love, which is the law of Christ" as the justification for his views on nonviolence.

Merton's writings on war and nonviolence received a boost when Pope John XXIII issued "Pacem in Terris," which underscored many of Merton's points. Today, Pope Francis often echoes Merton, saying in 2017 that nonviolence must become "the hallmark of our decisions, our relationships and our actions." One can only yearn for what Merton would have to say today at a time when the conflict between Ukraine and Russia has pushed the world once again toward the edge of a nuclear confrontation

Merton's writings on race are likewise rooted in Christian theology and church teaching. Hillis spends considerable time on an essay known as "Letters to a White Liberal," words that are as resonant today as when they were written in the summer of 1963. Merton plants his theological arguments against racism firmly within the context of the Incarnation. Christians are called to regard others as Christ. Merton pointedly asks, "How then, do we treat this other Christ, this person, who happens to be black?"

In one of the most moving sections of the book, Hillis delves into a string of correspondence between Merton and Father August Thompson, an African American priest of the Diocese of Alexandria, La., who would become one of American Catholicism's most significant voices. Writing

to Merton, Thompson described how in many communities African Americans could only enter a white parish if there was no black parish within a reasonable distance. Once there, he added, they had to sit together in the same section and wait until white parishioners had received Communion before being allowed to approach the altar rail.

For Merton, this meant that the Eucharist—"the sacrament of love that binds us together" and manifests Christ's love for all humankind—had been weaponized as an instrument of disunity and hate, "the ultimate blasphemy." What is so heartbreaking about many passages in Hillis's book is that we confront many of the same issues of discrimination, polarization and disunity today. Where and who are the prophetic voices today like Merton (and Father Thompson), who can return us to "the whole spirit and orientation" of our faith?

Hillis ends his book with a touching anecdote, listing the relics of various saints that Merton carried with him on that final, fateful voyage to Asia.

Still today, Thomas Merton calls us to immerse ourselves in the meaning of the Eucharist and in Christ's radical call of love. With the world beset by so many simultaneous crises, Merton's example of genuine encounter with God and with others, as Hillis ably points out, offers us a way forward.

Judith Valente is the author of five books on spirituality, including How to Be: A Monk & a Journalist Reflect on Living & Dying and Purpose & Prayer, Forgiveness & Friendship, with Paul Quenon, O.C.S.O. She is vice president of the International Thomas Merton Society.

An Age of Uncertainty

Since nuclear weapons destroyed the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in the Second World War 77 years ago, humanity has been under an existential threat of destroying itself. This threat predates the international concerns that have arisen from global warming, but it is at least as urgently in need of being eliminated. Michael Krepon's *Winning and Losing the Nuclear Peace: The Rise, Demise, and Revival of Arms Control* is a history of the efforts to do so.

"Arms control," as discussed in Krepon's book, can cover a multitude of concepts, measures and agreements. Or it can be considered more narrowly as a methodology. It includes mutually understood conditions of international security, ranging from unilateral undertakings to politically or legally binding agreements like confidence-building and security-building measures or treaties. Information exchanges on weapon stockpiles can be established; verified levels of armaments can be agreed upon; levels of weapons can be reduced or taken to zero. The latter two can also be considered disarmament. As a diplomatic methodology, arms control is an instrument of international relations both bilaterally and multilaterally, along with other components like embassies, trade, sanctions and war.

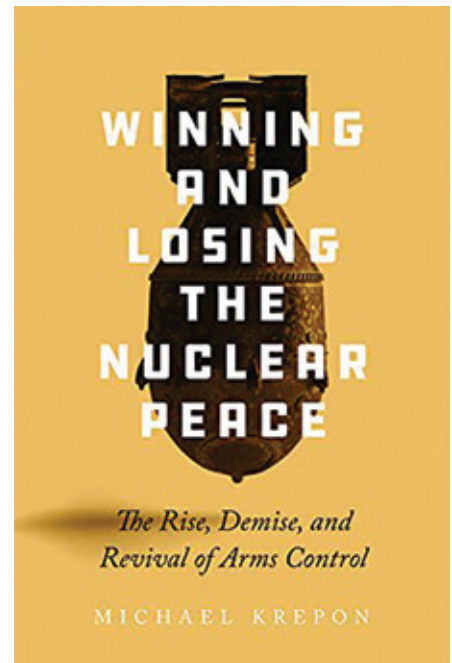
Krepon covers in depth the work of bureaucracies and individuals in the post-World War II era that established arms control measures, those on strategic nuclear weapons in particular. The treatment is understandably U.S.-oriented, but the book's over 500 pages provide a key history of the

times, events, organizations and people involved in the pursuit of a peaceful approach to national and global security.

Krepon describes the positions, and changes in those positions over time, of key players in the process, from presidents, secretaries of state and defense, to government officials in many departments and agencies, and also to figures in the public arena. Noting that positions often changed over time, he points out that Ronald Reagan began as a hawkish president and ended seeking the abolition of nuclear weapons in favor of the Strategic Defense Initiative. He reports that Paul Nitze, who served as secretary of the Navy and deputy secretary of defense in different administrations, was similarly inclined toward weapons, but in his later years supported abolition.

In *Winning and Losing the Nuclear Peace*, Krepon necessarily deals with nuclear deterrence. He recounts the "red-dot" briefing given to Defense Secretary Dick Cheney in 1989. If deterrence of the Soviet Union failed, the red dots on the map would be aim points for U.S. nuclear weapons. The number of dots, 10,000, was simply derived from the number of warheads in the stockpile; 40 weapons, for example, were targeted on Kyiv in Ukraine, then part of the U.S.S.R. Cheney was stunned. After detailed review, the number was nearly halved, helping set the stage for far-reaching nuclear arms control involving even further reductions.

Throughout the book, the underlying role of nuclear deterrence looms as a roadblock to moving more consistently and rapidly to the elimination of nuclear weapons, and to concomitantly make necessary modifications in conventional forces. Deterrent



strategy aims at prevailing, and, as Cheney discovered, seeks to acquire more and better weapon capabilities, thus undermining the approach of arms control. Krepon notes that "[s]ince completely unencumbered deterrence is too dangerous, rivals also seek guardrails to their competition, whether tacit or formal. Occasionally, they adopt methods that we call arms control." He continues that during the George H. W. Bush administration, "[a]rms control and reduction negotiations became essential management tools for Soviet decline. Treaty-making was both the manifestation and the instrument of trust building."

The Bush administration's approach was able to draw on the 1985 foundational statement of President Ronald Reagan and Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev that "[a] nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought." That statement has

Winning and Losing the Nuclear Peace
The Rise, Demise, and Revival of Arms
Control

By Michael Krepon
Stanford University Press
640p \$45

now been endorsed by China, the United Kingdom and France, the other three nuclear-weapon states party to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and, with the United States and Russia, permanent members of the U.N. Security Council. Whether that points to further and broader multilateral arms control remains to be seen.

Krepon gives an in-depth account of the interagency processes that led to what he terms the high point of arms control: the 1991 Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, or START I, and the 1990 Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty. These were supplemented by the indefinite extension of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1995, and the negotiation of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty in 1996. (The reviewer would add the 1993 Chemical Weapons Convention and the 1990 Vienna Document on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures.) The processes were multilevel, beginning with presidents and the National Security Council and its staff, and extending down through the government to the desk officers and across town to Congress.

Krepon also recounts the distressing backward movement thereafter, despite the New START Treaty of 2011, with U.S. abandonment of the Anti-Ballistic Missile (A.B.M.) Treaty in 2001, the unsigning of the Arms Trade Treaty in 2019, the 2018 withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive

Plan of Action (J.C.P.O.A.) agreement with Iran, and the 2020 withdrawal from the Treaty on Open Skies.

It is difficult to argue with Krepon's assessment of this backsliding, and it remains to be seen whether the Biden administration can energize a broad revival of arms control. An active effort is underway to rejoin the J.C.P.O.A. and restore the constraints on Iranian nuclear activities. Fortunately, the New START Treaty with Russia has been extended for four more years and a strategic stability dialogue initiated. The present crisis involving the Russian invasion of Ukraine will result in further disruption of progress in arms control.

Krepon concludes by stressing the central importance of norms to guide action to arrest further backsliding and to provide the basis for global efforts to reduce and then eliminate nuclear weapons, as well as to reduce reliance further on the use of force in global affairs. The principal norms he identifies are maintaining the absence of use in war of nuclear weapons until (at least) 2045, the centenary of Hiroshima and Nagasaki; not conducting further tests of nuclear weapons (the last was by North Korea in 2017); and preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons to additional states (the last was North Korea).

It is not guaranteed that these norms will continue unbroken. In that sense, they are similar to more formally articulated undertakings that can also be broken, as detailed above. But they are foundational, and, if broken, no effort should be spared to return to them. They provide a point of departure for measures to further develop the regime of arms control. Without them, Krepon would argue, the ardu-

ous process of developing, negotiating and establishing politically or legally binding agreements would be even more onerous.

America readers will likely be aware that Pope Francis has declared that not only the use but even the possession of nuclear weapons (and thus nuclear deterrence) is immoral. This position is a clear benchmark for Catholics and others to engage with efforts for arms control, to support policies for the elimination of nuclear weapons at the earliest moment and to move beyond the many international and civil conflicts with their terrible human costs from the use of conventional weapons.

Arms control efforts related to both nuclear and conventional weapons are needed; both tracks are entirely Christian in their objectives; both respond to religious convictions throughout the world. *Winning and Losing the Nuclear Peace* is of great value as a guide through the history of what has been achieved and for pointing the way toward the revival of arms control.

Pierce S. Corden has been an expert adviser to the Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See to the United Nations since 2013.

A Giant on the Court

Many eyes will be on the Supreme Court this year. Will the court overrule *Roe v. Wade* (1973), a 7-to-2 opinion by which, through its “raw judicial power” (to quote from Justice Byron White’s dissent), the court created a constitutional right to abortion? Will the court reverse *Citizens Union v. Federal Election Commission* (2010), a 5-to-4 decision in which the dissent argued strongly that Congress should recognize that corporations are different from human beings in law and in reality? These two cases show the importance of the dissent in Supreme Court decisions.

“There are silences in American history,” Peter S. Canellos writes in his book, *The Great Dissenter: The Story of John Marshall Harlan, America’s Judicial Hero*. Canellos provides us with a fascinating biography of a Supreme Court judge who lived through such periods of silence but was not silent himself. Justice Harlan was the sole dissenter in both the Civil Rights Cases (1883), a bundle of five cases in which the Supreme Court held that it was constitutional for Congress to bar people from stores, inns or modes of transportation based on their race, and in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), in which the court held that the Constitution established the separate-but-equal doctrine.

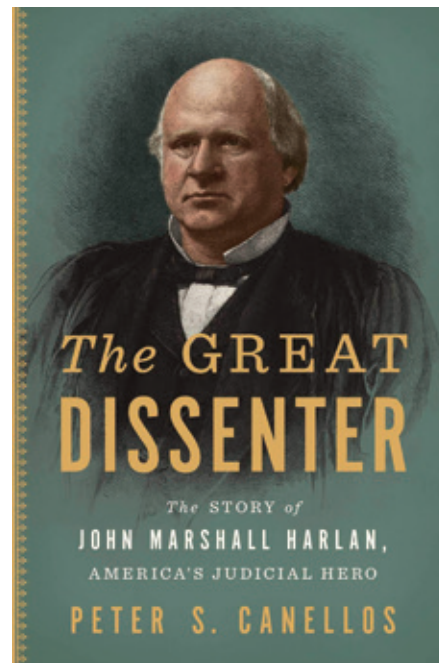
Harlan’s father decided his son should be a Supreme Court justice—and named him John Marshall after the famous Supreme Court judge. The family owned slaves, supported slavery through the Civil War and opposed the 13th Amendment; yet Justice Harlan still went on to become

a prominent advocate for civil rights for Black Americans.

Canellos’s book is actually a biography of two extraordinary men. In addition to John Marshall Harlan, it also chronicles the life of his half-brother, Robert. The son of John Marshall Harlan’s father and an enslaved woman, Robert had a great influence on the Supreme Court justice, though their lives took completely different paths. When both were children, their father was informed by the local schoolteacher that no Black children could be allowed into the school. Denied the benefits academics could bring, Robert devoted his time to raising and racing horses and achieved great success as a “horse-racing impresario, gold rush entrepreneur, financier of Black-owned businesses, world traveler, state representative, and leading Black citizen in Ohio.”

The book also contains significant detail on the Civil War and the politics of Kentucky. It covers John Marshall Harlan’s efforts to become governor of Kentucky (he lost) and his support of Rutherford B. Hayes for the Republican Party presidential nomination in 1876, a decision that helped him become a Supreme Court justice. Some of the numerous personalities and events Harlan witnessed during his life included Henry Clay, Stephen Douglas, Andrew Jackson, George McClellan (the Democratic Party nominee for the 1864 presidential election), Frederick Douglass, the Ku Klux Klan, the Whigs, the Know-Nothings and Reconstruction, all of which make this 817-page work an enjoyable read.

One of the most reprehensible legal events during this time was the decision in the *Dred Scott* case in 1857, in which Chief Justice Roger Taney



The Great Dissenter
The Story of John Marshall Harlan,
America’s Judicial Hero
By Peter S. Canellos
Simon & Schuster
817p \$32.50

(a Catholic) joined the majority in the 7-to-2 decision that deemed slaves had no claim to citizenship. Taney’s opinion relegated all slaves—“even though [those] living in freedom with as much wealth as Robert Harlan [Robert’s freedom was purchased in 1848]—to the permanent purgatory of second-class status in the nation to which they were born.”

The second half of *The Great Dissenter* will engage readers with a particular interest in law and history. Harlan was involved in numerous important cases during his 34 years on the Supreme Court, though the most remarkable are those in which he offered a dissent. One such case came after Congress adopted the Civil Rights

Act of 1875, which banned racial discrimination by private individuals in inns, railroads and places of public amusement. In an 8-to-1 decision, the court held that the 14th Amendment applies to states, not private persons, and that as such, the Civil Rights Act was an unconstitutional overreach.

Only Harlan dissented. He believed that the writers of the 13th and 14th Amendments intended to prohibit providers of public functions the “right” to deny access to freed people “some of the most essential means of existence,” whether those providers were states or private parties and entities. In 1964, almost a century after Harlan’s dissent, Congress, through its authority to regulate interstate commerce, finally passed a Civil Rights Act with provisions similar to those of the 1875 Act.

Another major case in which Harlan was the only voice for justice was *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896). Homer Plessy, a Creole man, had purchased a first-class ticket on a railroad trip wholly within Louisiana. Mr. Plessy entered the whites-only first-class car, identified himself as “colored,” and was arrested. The Supreme Court’s 8-to-1 majority easily resolved the issue: There was no 13th or 14th Amendment violation because the activity was *within* one state (and thus involved no federal violation), and the separate-but-equal doctrine was declared a reasonable exercise of the state’s police power to protect the safety and comfort of both races.

Harlan viewed the separate-but-equal theory as “designed to provide a legal fig leaf for segregation.” His dissent poignantly identified the injustice of the doctrine: “The destinies of the two races in this country

are indissolubly linked together, and the interests of both require that the common government of all shall not permit the seeds of race hate to be planted under the sanction of law.” According to Canellos, Harlan’s dissent in *Plessy* was his “proudest achievement, the culmination of his career on the bench, and his greatest contribution to the future of the nation.”

One other Harlan dissent deserves emphasis: *Lochner v. New York* (1905), a 5-to-4 decision concerning an employer (*Lochner*) who had been convicted for allowing an employee to work for more than 60 hours per week in violation of state law. According to the court’s majority, the New York law was itself a violation of the right to purchase or sell one’s labor, which was guaranteed by the 14th Amendment. Again, Harlan dissented. Over time, *Lochner* became “so hated as a legal precedent that it almost brought down the Supreme Court.” The majority view became representative of what is known as the “*Lochner* era” in jurisprudence and was viewed by many as synonymous with judicial overreach in striking down state laws.

While readers can differ on the positives and negatives of numerous Supreme Court justices, when we meet John Marshall Harlan, we must stand in awe. Both Thurgood Marshall and Antonin Scalia admired Harlan; and Chief Justice John Roberts moved the painting of Harlan from a hallway in the Supreme Court building to the justices’ inner sanctum.

While it took almost a century for the United States to begin to legally enforce the protection of equal rights after Harlan’s term on the court, this book should give readers hope that the work that still needs to be continued

in our lifetime will be accomplished, so that other “silences” cannot be ignored and justice can prevail.

Michael A. Vaccari is an attorney, an adjunct professor of law at the Fordham University School of Law and the author of numerous book reviews on law and public policy.

EXCERPT FROM THE THIRTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Who will lead after you?

After the Easter season concludes, we celebrate the solemnities of the Most Holy Trinity and of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ on the two Sundays after Pentecost, and then we return to the normal rhythm of Ordinary Time. As we resume this liturgical season, the readings call on us to confront a difficult reality: What will happen to our work when we are gone?

The readings for the Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time are clearly

influenced by the months-long seasons of Lent and Easter, and they inspire reflection on our impact and legacy. In the first reading from 1 Kings, Elijah calls Elisha to travel with him on his prophetic ministry. Elijah symbolically throws his cloak on him, signaling that he is called to be a prophet, and Elisha abruptly uproots his life to follow him.

In the Gospel from Luke, Jesus calls people to follow him, but each has a reason not to go right away. Je-

sus responds unfavorably to their hesitation, emphasizing that a call from God should be answered immediately and enthusiastically. Both Elijah and Jesus called these followers in order to empower the community to continue their work after their departure. These leaders recognized the importance of instilling wisdom and conferring authority so that work can continue. We must be mindful of how we can prepare others to grow as leaders and shape the future.

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columns can be
found online.

PENTECOST SUNDAY (C), JUNE 5, 2022

Receive the Holy Spirit.

THE SOLEMNITY OF THE MOST HOLY TRINITY (C), JUNE 12, 2022

The Trinity can inspire our relationships with ourselves and others.

THE SOLEMNITY OF THE MOST HOLY BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST (C), JUNE 19, 2022

We must provide physical and spiritual sustenance.

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (C), JUNE 26, 2022

Preparing the next generation of leaders.



Meet the Author

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

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Evangelization Today

Do not be afraid to share the love of the Lord

By William A. Wack



The Holy Spirit is alive and active, renewing the church in every age. That is not what one might expect to hear in light of the challenges, divisions and vitriol that are so evident in our world and in the Catholic Church. But I am convinced that God is leading us back into the heart of the Gospel. Though it is hardly novel to God, it may feel radical to us.

St. Paul VI wrote, “The church exists to evangelize.” And have we not been doing this for 2,000 years? Well, yes and no. There have been periods of great missionary fervor in the history of our church, but in the last few centuries, it would seem as though the people of God have chosen largely to focus more on building up and maintaining our beautiful institutions. The harsh reality is that if we were graded on our faithfulness to the Great Commission, we might not even get an A for effort.

Jesus’ mandate is quite specific. He did not charge Peter and the other apostles to “build and maintain” but to be a “fisher of men and women.” The Apostles, filled with the Holy Spirit, preached the message of the Gospel boldly. As a result, great crowds came to them and were baptized—5,000 in one day! They, in turn, proclaimed Christ to others, gathering more and more into the fold.

Have we lost that zeal? I would say yes, for the most part. Today, one even hears talk of a smaller, more

faithful church, as if that were to be preferred over “a great multitude, which no one could count” (Rev 7:9). Instead of going out to the world, we Christians spend a great deal of time trying to shore up our structures, and the infighting and divisions are constant. Indeed, the harshest attacks on the church and her leaders quite often come from within these days.

What does evangelization look like in 2022? First, before we can share the depth of our faith with others, it is vital that we grow in our awareness of the love that God has for each of us. Catholics have not always been comfortable talking about a “personal relationship” with Jesus Christ. But we know innately that this is what God wants for us. We can all start by asking God to help us to grow in our relationship with Jesus in the Holy Spirit.

If each one of us were convinced of God’s never-ending love for us, there would be nothing that we couldn’t do or overcome. As the psalmist says, “With my God I can scale any wall” (18:29).

One of my new favorite passages of the Bible is Zec 8:23. The prophet lived and ministered in times of struggle and confusion—an age not unlike our own. He had faith that God’s plan was to bring salvation to all. One of his prophecies ends with great hope and anticipation in the coming of Christ: “In those days, 10 people from nations of every language will take hold, yes,

take hold of the cloak of every [Jew] and say, ‘Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.’”

What if we lived out our faith every day in such a way that people around us would be compelled to say, “I don’t know what it is about her, but I want to feel the same way”? People don’t want to hear us talk about the faith; they want to experience Jesus.

One way to draw people in is to ask them about their experience of God. “Tell me about a time in your life when you *knew* that God was with you.” After listening to their story, share why your Catholic faith is important to you. Interacting with people on social media in a positive light also gives more opportunities to evangelize.

Pope Francis is clearly right when he urges us to go out to the people on the margins of society. Yes, this means serving our brothers and sisters who are hungry, homeless and hurting. At the same time, the people on the margins today are those who have left the church because of one reason or many, as well as those who are looking for some meaning in life.

Go to them. Do not be afraid to share the love of the Lord with them. Go.

Bishop William A. Wack, C.S.C., heads the Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee, Fla.
Twitter: @BishopWack.



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Celebrating the Life & Ministry of
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Saturday June 18, 2022
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10AM Friendship with God:

Praying as Bill Barry Taught Us
Jim Martin, SJ

12N Luncheon

2PM Love ought to show itself in deeds over and above words:

The Spiritual Legacy of Bill Barry
Nancy Sheridan, SASV

4PM Memorial Mass

George E. Collins, SJ – Main Celebrant
Kenneth J. Hughes, SJ – Homilist
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