

America

THE HEALTH CARE ISSUE

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Sunrise, oil on canvas, 36 x 48

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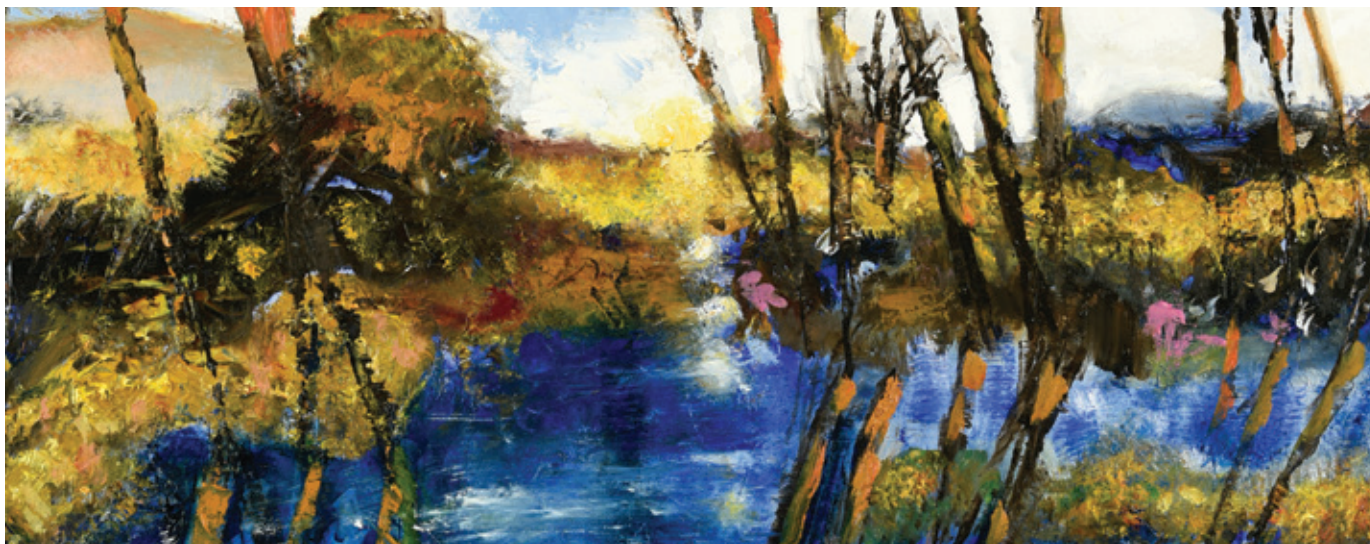
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Light on the Water, oil on canvas, 30 x 30

The Dangerous Temptation of an Enemy You Can Detest

On May 1, I watched from the roof of our Jesuit community residence as a crowd faced off with police outside the Fordham Lincoln Center campus across the street. Earlier that morning, protesters had set up an encampment inside a lobby at an entrance to the campus.

Around 6 p.m. that evening, the police arrested 11 Fordham students and four alumni who had refused to leave the encampment, while officers outside interposed themselves between the wall of windows looking into the lobby and the crowd on the sidewalk.

From the crowd outside, there were chants of “Free, free Palestine,” calls for a cease-fire and demands for the university to divest from companies linked to Israel. There were Muslim students kneeling on prayer rugs; there were signs about justice and Jesuit values. But the crowd also chanted “N.Y.P.D., K.K.K.” and “There is only one solution: intifada revolution.”

After the protesters in the encampment had been arrested, the crowd dispersed without further confrontation with the police.

On the other side of the country, events unfolded differently at a pro-Palestinian protest encampment at the University of California, Los Angeles. According to an analysis of videos by The New York Times, on the night of April 30, counterprotesters began tearing down the barricades, shooting fireworks toward the encampment and attacking people within it. They continued for hours before the police arrived and for some time even after the police were on the scene. On May 1, protesters were threatened with arrest if they did not leave, and the police cleared the encampment in the early hours of May 2.

Why is it so easy for righteous anger at violence to result in endorsement and escalation of violence, both verbal and physical? How does speaking up against the war in Gaza lead to slandering New York police officers, many of whom are themselves not white, as “K.K.K.”? How does it justify chanting “intifada,” which, no matter what broader meaning may be intended, signals approval of a history of suicide bombings targeting Israeli civilians? How does bearing witness to those murdered on Oct. 7 or calling attention to the hostages still being held by Hamas become license to charge toward and attack protesters, destroying any possibility of their demonstration concluding peacefully?

The danger of an opponent whom you can thoroughly hate is as basic as the problem of the ends justifying the means. If a cause is so evil that it must be opposed at all costs, it becomes all too easy to ignore anyone who suffers those costs.

The seductive temptation of completely detesting an enemy is that no matter how much power we might actually hold, we get to play David to another’s Goliath. We do not have to ask how we can make peace, because any means that can destroy an evil so immense and dangerous is automatically justified.

So Israel, which faces real danger from Hamas’s continued commitment to terrorist violence, can continue to postpone grappling with the fact that it holds life and death power over three million Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and more than two million in Gaza under siege. As long as the threat persists, 34,000 deaths and the specter of famine in Gaza seem a lesser responsibility to Israel than the safety of its own citizens.

So protesters at universities in the United States, outraged by the near-total destruction of Gaza and the impotence of international pressure to restrain Israel’s use of force or even significantly improve the delivery of humanitarian aid, can adopt slogans echoing those with which Hamas justifies murder. As long as Palestinians are living under Israeli occupation, any act of violence, no matter whom it targets, can be described as resistance against oppression.

While these temptations to detest an enemy may run parallel to each other, they are not therefore symmetrical. Israel’s military superiority—sustained by U.S. funds and weapons—makes the violence they are unleashing on Gaza far more deadly than Hamas’s. And while a unilateral surrender and return of hostages by Hamas could stop the war, it is Israel that continues to bomb cities filled with civilian refugees.

Any significant move toward peace requires one side to offer to forswear violence that it could justify by its own moral logic. There is no “safe” way, under those logics, for either to make that move first.

Many pro-Israel activists display pictures of hostages still being held by Hamas. A photo from the Fordham student newspaper’s reporting on the encampment shows a tent with a sign that reads, “All eyes on Gaza.” But the temptation to detest an enemy as completely evil takes focus away from those who are suffering, directing it obsessively toward the danger of what must be opposed.

Finding hope requires imagining more than an enemy’s defeat. It requires imagining that they, too, are capable of seeking a good that can be shared.

Sam Sawyer, S.J.



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AP Photo/Alessandra Tarantino

Pope Francis is greeted by gondoliers upon his arrival in Venice, Italy, on April 28. It was the pope's first trip to the city, where he visited the Vatican pavilion at the 60th Venice Biennale.

Cover: iStock/America

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How are Catholics receiving “Dignitas Infinita”?

On April 8, the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith released “Dignitas Infinita,” which reaffirmed and clarified church teaching on a host of issues surrounding human dignity, including abortion, poverty, migration, and gender identity. “If you are not challenged somewhere in your own moral thinking by reading [“Dignitas Infinita”], then you most likely have not read it thoroughly enough,” wrote Sam Sawyer, S.J., **America’s** editor in chief, in his Of Many Things column last month. Father Sawyer also joined “Inside the Vatican” host Colleen Dulle and Outreach’s new executive director, Michael O’Loughlin, for a roundtable discussion analyzing the declaration, including reactions from L.G.B.T.Q. Catholics. **America’s** coverage inspired conversation from readers grappling with the declaration’s teaching.

I am thankful for the church’s engagement with [transgender issues] and grateful for the positive steps and outreach that Pope Francis has made. But as a grandparent of a transgender teen, I must say that it is apparent the church still has a long way to go. I hope the pope’s synodal approach of prayerful listening can soon welcome those who are struggling with this hard and often tortuous journey. As we’ve seen, much can be learned through this process.

Bruce Daigle

In our church today, we seem to be “talking past each other” on the topic of sexuality, gender identity and related topics. With the hope that church doctrine will continue to develop in wisdom directed by the Holy Spirit, we need to talk with each other and work toward what is truly right and just. We need to guard against judging, condemning or criticizing others who disagree with us. Let’s hear each other and engage with related science!

Mary O’Neill

Despite controversy, I hope this document moves us all to a better understanding of truth. My prayer would be for a follow-up document on the pastoral process because this document may cause a feeling among many of a more unwelcoming church for those seeking God. On the other hand, I always try to not let my disagreement with certain church teachings damage in any way my relationship with my Savior, Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, some impacted by this document will suffer in disappointment. My prayers are with them and with Pope Francis.

Michael Barberi

Father Sawyer tells us: “Resist, at least for a little while, the temptation to find ‘takeaways’ or to boil [the declaration] down to the specifics of what it affirms or denies.” That seems almost impossible for many people I know—myself included, many times. I’m not sure if this is particular to people in the developed world or even just Americans, but instantaneous results seem to be in demand these days. A

little over a century ago, just disseminating a document like this to the global Catholic population might have taken years. I’m not sure the speed at which we receive information has been a good thing for the people of God.

Stephen Healy

I am troubled by this document’s emphasis on every child’s right to “fully human and not artificially induced origin.” I mean that in all reverence—not only for the Incarnation and its implications for human dignity—but also for the dozens of students I have taught over the last decade who were conceived through what the document deems artificial means. Do we really want to treat such people as if they were somehow deprived of a central feature of their humanity? Like other teaching documents in the history of the church, the important thing here is that this will open up channels for further discussion and raise further questions.

John Watkins

One recent study [in the Netherlands] suggested that most people grow out of these transgender feelings. That means we should not be advocating for medical intervention. We should be talking to and treating these people. The lack of informed consent, secrecy and manipulation in this area is the culprit in so many bad decisions. Kindness does not mean we must provide sex change operations.

Letitia Santiago

➔ Most children may seem to grow out of any gender ambiguity. But a small percentage progress to the firm conviction that they have been assigned the wrong gender no matter the external genitalia, if they had not already developed such a conviction earlier. Without serious and professional treatment they have a strikingly high susceptibility to depression and suicide. I’m sure that there are probably a few charlatans working as doctors, but not at respected academic practices.

Joseph McGuire

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We Stand in Solidarity With Migrants and Asylum Seekers

Annunciation House, in El Paso, Tex., receives as many as 1,000 migrants in a single day. Located just north of Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, the Catholic house of hospitality has served those most in need for nearly 50 years, often maintaining a collaborative relationship with U.S. Border Patrol agents.

In February, Attorney General Ken Paxton of Texas demanded that Annunciation House hand over records of its guests, accusing the outreach group of “human smuggling” and “facilitating illegal entry into the United States.” The community in El Paso, as well as the broader church in the United States, rallied to support Annunciation House.

“The state of Texas is using governmental pressure to curtail the work of the Church in one of its most fundamental obligations: to feed the hungry, to shelter the homeless, and to provide drink to the thirsty,” Cardinal Robert McElroy of San Diego said in a statement. “No government can morally tell us to abandon or limit this mission.”

The targeting of Annunciation House is but the most recent development in a disturbing trend of the works of mercy being attacked by politicians and lobbying groups. In December 2022, four House Republicans accused Catholic Charities USA of “facilitating the border crisis.” Earlier that year, Judicial Watch and CatholicVote filed a Freedom of Information Act lawsuit demanding records of communication that the U.S. Departments of Homeland Security and of Health and Human Services had “with Catholic organizations near the Texas border that were aiding illegal immigrants.”

Rather than aiming at solutions to immigration issues, these actions

seem designed to inflame underlying xenophobic fears in the hopes of capturing votes. Sadly, this pattern of demonizing immigrants and those who offer them aid might prove effective in November. According to a survey by the Pew Research Center, taken in January, 78 percent of Americans described the influx of immigrants at the southern border as either a “crisis” or a “major problem.”

Anti-immigrant rhetoric is no novelty in the United States. The Know Nothing Party, both anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic, grew in power and influence during the mid-19th century. Echoes of its influence can be heard in the “great replacement” conspiracies of today.

Many Americans worry immigrants will take away jobs, overpopulate our cities and deepen cultural differences. But such fears—then and now—are unfounded. Contrary to the perception that they are a burden on the public purse, immigrants are playing a key role in the economic recovery. Demand for workers is high, and employers often report challenges when filling job vacancies, but immigrant workers, who constitute about 19 percent of the workforce, are filling the gap.

And while reports of caravans of undocumented immigrants heading from Latin America to our border dominate news cycles, the number of undocumented workers living in the United States actually decreased by 1.75 million between 2007 and 2021. In fact, more than three-quarters of the foreign-born population are either naturalized citizens or legal permanent residents. (And many of the rest would likely seek citizenship, legal residency or work permits if the legal avenues available to do so matched

the number of people the U.S. economy requires.)

The images Americans see of the thousands waiting to enter through our southern border paint a simplistic picture of the immigration dilemma. Not captured in those images is a backlog of pending cases in immigration courts, which currently amounts to more than 3.5 million, according to data compiled by Syracuse University. The current regulatory apparatus simply was not built to accommodate the current flow of migrants, which can overwhelm those who meet them in border cities.

Without recourse to other pathways, migrants are funneled into an already inundated asylum system. As border security has increased, so have smugglers’ fees. Human trafficking has evolved into a multibillion-dollar international criminal network.

Meanwhile, the number of migrant deaths on the border escalates. In 2022, a record 800 migrants died, many of them in drownings. But instead of receiving compassion, the huddled masses are branded as “an invasion.”

There is no short-term solution to the nation’s immigration challenges. Certainly, increasing guest worker visas and expediting asylum hearings would help. A comprehensive solution must include addressing “push factors” in the home countries. While people have a right to migrate, they also have a right to stay in their native land. Creating a hemispheric balance between those two rights will take years of thoughtful and patient policy work.

In the meantime, Catholics and people of good will must stand in solidarity with migrants and help them adjust to their new life in the United States. In New York, for example,

Catholic Charities has partnered with the mayor's office to welcome the more than 104,000 migrants who have arrived since 2022. That includes migrants bused to the city by Republican governors seeking to score political points.

Those efforts must, and undoubtedly will, continue. After all, the Catholic Church in the United States was built by and for immigrants. The Knights of Columbus was founded for and by Irish immigrants, and St. Frances Xavier Cabrini, the patron saint of immigrants, founded an order that initially served Italian immigrants in New York.

In the face of partisan attacks, the outreach of the church must continue unabated. "Let me be clear," Bishop Mark J. Seitz of El Paso said in response to accusations of human trafficking erroneously leveled against Annunciation House. "For the church's part, we will endeavor to work with all in pursuit of the common good of our city and of our nation. We will not be intimidated in our work to serve Jesus Christ in our sisters and brothers fleeing danger and seeking to keep their families together."

Those who are attacking the church for its involvement in advocacy for immigrants often claim that the church should stay out of politics. But the reason the church has a political position on immigration is because of the Gospel mandate to "love one another as I have loved you." No just law can stop solidarity at the arbitrary line of a border, nor can a just government require the church to condition the works of mercy on the immigration status of those in need. From the Texas border and beyond, from sea to shining sea, we must join together so that the Gospel may continue to be preached and put into practice in this land.

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How science and spirituality coexist on the frontlines of health care

Pandemics, police brutality, deportations, evictions, hate crimes and other threats to marginalized groups have rekindled discussion within religious circles about the sanctity and care of vulnerable strangers.

Unfortunately, such conversations often do not include the perspectives of public servants who directly care for strangers, including nurses, therapists, educators and social workers. Many of these professionals are trained in scientific methods that can be indifferent, if not hostile, to the spiritual qualities that make human beings special. At the same time, society expects them to deliver care with a “human touch” that affirms individuals’ ultimate worth. They are not religious workers, but they still play a pivotal role in incorporating the *imago Dei*, the notion that all people are made in the image and likeness of God, into public life.

The sociologist Max Weber foreshadowed this tension over a century ago in his writings on the place of religion in modern society. He noted that for most of human history, care was restricted to family and friends. It was not until the Axial Age (800-200 B.C.) that communities first began to recognize all humans, including foreigners and other strangers, as spiritual beings deserving of protection. This spiritual revolution greatly expanded the reach of care and inspired the creation of public facilities that use impartial criteria to ensure (at least in theory) that all people can have their needs met.

Weber predicted, however, that as scientific authorities assumed greater responsibility for individuals’ well-being, members of the clergy and others might object, insisting that care be left to churches, charities and families. Weber understood this objection, fearing that as bureaucracies and

advanced technology permeated and further rationalized Western society, they could extinguish human qualities, like the spiritual, that care workers had previously nurtured to help them recognize the dignity of vulnerable strangers—and thus dissipate those workers’ passion to care for others.

Ironically, Weber never inquired into the experiences of frontline helping professionals. Perhaps this is because care has traditionally been provided by some of the least powerful people in a society—slaves, servants, members of lower castes and especially women—and thus devalued. Or perhaps Weber, like many academics, assumed that care workers merely follow the rules of their institutions and exercise little, if any, agency.

The reality is that precisely because they interact with the most vulnerable populations, frontline helping professionals must constantly balance rationalistic understandings advocated by science and more humanistic or religious ones like the *imago Dei*. Indeed, in response to clients’ growing complaints about the impersonal nature of modern bureaucracies, hospitals and other institutions have begun to advertise their commitment to holistic care that recognizes individuals as biologically, psychologically, socially and spiritually constituted. These efforts to legitimate themselves in the eyes of potential customers effectively make it the duty of care professionals to coordinate science and spirituality.

And as responsibility for the care of the human species has shifted from family and friends to large, science-based institutions, care workers increasingly function as surrogates for loved ones. This was most obvious during the Covid-19 pandemic in hospitals and nursing homes, when pa-

tients were not allowed to receive visitors and care workers were the only people available to compensate for their absence. But responsibility for care of the human spirit falls on frontline staff whenever we assign responsibility for at-risk groups—the young, the old, the poor, the sick—to public systems run by scientific authorities who demand that others not interfere with their dispassionate methods and procedures. To counterbalance these organizations’ cold nature, staff members who directly interact with the public are expected to exhibit empathy and act as moral stand-ins.

My study of a public teaching hospital’s nursing staff found that, contrary to the conventional belief that spiritual care is the domain of chaplains, nearly half of nurses say they provide more spiritual care than these religious authorities. A large majority of nurses also said they were quite comfortable discussing spiritual questions about the meaning of life, illness and death; and they reported experiences at work that had a profound impact on their understanding of spirituality. These stories—about how nurses tried to help patients cope, for example, with disturbing test results—were often crafted in ways that not only made the spiritual plausible, but also suggested how science and spirituality can coexist.

Especially important, nurses who considered their work a calling interpreted a wide range of situations as warranting spiritual intervention and deployed a large set of practices, from prayer to simply being present, to care for patients’ needs. Thus, they were actively involved in reminding patients of their sacred selves in an otherwise dehumanizing environment.

To appreciate why care workers are so important to promoting the

imago Dei, consider what the political scientist Joan Tronto identifies as the four phases of care: *caring about* (recognizing that care is needed), *taking care of* (determining who should administer care), *caregiving* (directly meeting needs) and *care-receiving* (how care is experienced by recipients).

In discussions about how to put the *imago Dei* into practice, it is tempting to focus on where care is needed (caring about) and who should provide care (taking care of). But this focus can exclude those who provide immediate help (caregiving) and are entrusted with dignifying the vulnerable (thus improving the experience of care-receiving). Sadly, this omission mirrors how care work tends to be

distributed in the wider society: The easiest and most recognized tasks of care are performed by powerful actors, whereas the most challenging and invisible tasks are relegated to those with less authority.

Professional care work offers myriad opportunities to honor the sanctity of vulnerable strangers. It also requires applying protocols and techniques that can do the opposite. If people of faith wish to defend the *imago Dei*, they need to let those who perform this balancing act on a daily basis into the conversation. Better yet, guardians of this ethic should immerse themselves in the world of care. There they can begin to fully appreciate the creativity and commitment required to implement a transcendent, univer-

sal ethic in a real-world setting. They may come to realize that if vulnerable strangers are to be revered during a time of religious decline, it will likely depend on secular workers who are charged with the sacred duty of caring for all.

Don Grant is a professor of sociology at the University of Colorado, where he is a fellow at the Renewable and Sustainable Energy Institute and directs the Social Innovation and Care, Health, and Resilience programs. He is also a recently ordained minister in the United Church of Christ and is the author of *Nursing the Spirit*.

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In ‘Dignitas Infinita,’ the Vatican raises moral objections to the global surrogacy industry

By Kevin Clarke

A press release from a research company focusing on emerging investment opportunities recently alerted subscribers to an exciting new market with a “staggering” compound annual growth rate of 6.25 percent.

Those who understand why that growth rate is something to get excited about will no doubt be following through on opportunities within this rapidly expanding market; the rest of us might just be scratching our heads in ethical befuddlement. The commodity being discussed in the press release is not orange juice, or pork belly futures or the latest derivative concocted on Wall Street, but gestational surrogacy.

The now-worldwide surrogacy industry is an outgrowth of major in vitro fertilization advances in recent decades that have opened up new options for couples or single parents seeking to create or expand a family. The surrogate baby boom is being driven largely by people in the West who are struggling with infertility or worried about health risks because of difficult previous pregnancies.

According to the World Health Organization, 18 percent of people in high-income nations now contend with infertility at some point in their lives. Researchers blame career- or lifestyle-driven delays in family-making for

some of the difficulties people are facing in conceiving and bringing pregnancies to term.

Even greater demand has been created by couples in same-sex relationships. Celebrity influencers documenting their surrogacy journeys on Instagram may have further stimulated demand.

The global surrogacy market, valued at \$14 billion in 2022, is projected to reach \$129 billion by 2032. It seems one couple’s fertility problem is another person’s opportunity. But we are talking about human bodies and human life, not your typical commodity.

For the church, questions about the morality of surrogacy transcend issues of market regulation, citizenship and parental authority claims. On April 8, in its declaration “Dignitas Infinita,” the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith outlined a definitive position on surrogacy, including it among a host of contemporary social and geopolitical concerns that contradict the church’s understanding of human dignity.

Taking “a stand against the practice of surrogacy, through which the immensely worthy child becomes a mere object,” the dicastery’s prefect, Cardinal Víctor Manuel Fernández, cited a commentary on surrogacy from Pope Francis:

The path to peace calls for respect for life, for every human life, starting with the life of the unborn child in the mother's womb, which cannot be suppressed or turned into an object of trafficking. In this regard, I deem deplorable the practice of so-called surrogate motherhood, which represents a grave violation of the dignity of the woman and the child, based on the exploitation of situations of the mother's material needs. A child is always a gift and never the basis of a commercial contract. Consequently, I express my hope for an effort by the international community to prohibit this practice universally (No. 48).

That is surely a position that will frustrate couples or single people yearning for children who see in surrogacy a path to family. That desire notwithstanding, Cardinal Fernández argues in the declaration, "acknowledging the dignity of the human person...entails recognizing every dimension of the dignity of the conjugal union and of human procreation. Considering this, the legitimate desire to have a child cannot be transformed into a 'right to a child' that fails to respect the dignity of that child as the recipient of the gift of life" (No. 49).

But fans of free market solutions to, well, just about everything may not see much to be unhappy about in surrogacy deals. The libertarian Cato Institute charges that critics have exaggerated problematic aspects of surrogacy arrangements.

In a "quest to highlight the perceived harms of surrogacy, critics systematically minimize the substantial value of creating life," a Cato director argues. "For most couples, surrogacy is the last stop on their journey after a hard-fought battle with infertility. Most children produced via surrogacy would not be alive without it."

Contemporary surrogacy comes in two forms: Some would-be parents are able to arrange "altruistic surrogacy," in which a friend or relative agrees to carry their offspring. Only associated medical costs are reimbursed in an altruistic surrogacy. This form of surrogacy is legal in the United Kingdom, which, like many other nations, has ruled out so-called commercial or for-profit surrogacy.

A "traditional surrogate" hosts the pregnancy and serves as the egg donor as well, so the baby under contract would also be the surrogate mother's biological offspring. That form of surrogacy is rapidly losing ground to gesta-

tional surrogacy as I.V.F. breakthroughs have made it possible for couples and single parents to use their own embryos in surrogate wombs; in such cases, the surrogate mother has no genetic connection to her offspring.

While the total cost of a surrogacy in Canada or the United States can range from \$120,000 to \$250,000, costs can be substantially lower elsewhere. In Mexico, Colombia and other mid- to low-income nations, a surrogacy can be delivered for about half what it would cost in the United States, accelerating the expansion of fertility and surrogacy tourism as would-be parents from affluent nations shop around the world for the lowest costs.

The legal and practical challenges that intended parents must overcome in order to secure a child through surrogacy and bring the child legally to their home countries are manifold. How will the nationality of a child born overseas be determined? What if the surrogate mother declines at the last minute to turn over the infant she is giving birth to? How are the surrogate's future medical costs internalized in the market? Can a surrogate mother decide on her own to terminate a pregnancy? Can the intended parents who contracted the surrogacy overrule that decision?

Many of these questions and others have not been thoroughly addressed by international and local law. How the surrogacy industry is regulated varies from nation to nation—and, within the United States, from state to state.

To some, the Vatican's indictment of surrogacy may seem misplaced or even quaint as development in surrogacy and related fertility science and tech accelerates, but the church has not been the only transnational actor to express concern about the implications of surrogacy. According to Unicef, current international human rights law "does not provide safeguards specifically focusing on domestic surrogacy and International Surrogacy Arrangements (ISAs), which places children born through surrogacy at risk."

Despite its growing popularity, the institution of global surrogacy exists in what a former United Nations special rapporteur on the sale and sexual exploitation of children calls an "international regulatory vacuum" that "leaves children born through this method vulnerable to breaches of their rights," warning that surrogacy "may often amount to the sale of children."

"There is no right to have a child under international law," said the special rapporteur, Maud de Boer-Buquichio, in 2018 as she presented a report on the surrogacy phenomenon to the Human Rights Council in Geneva. "Children are not goods or services that the State can guarantee or provide. They are human beings with rights."

An analysis of international surrogacy arrangements

from Unicef published in February 2022 points out that “children born through surrogacy...are at risk of multiple human rights violations—particularly, their right to an identity, including name, nationality, family relations and access to origins; the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health; and the right to not be sold.”

And Unicef warns: “Decisions may be made by adults in surrogacy situations which are discriminatory based on the child’s disability and/or gender, and which are contrary to the child’s best interests as the paramount consideration.”

In “Dignitas Infinita,” Cardinal Fernández argues that the industry “violates the dignity of the woman, whether she is coerced into it or chooses to subject herself to it freely.”

A surrogate mother, he says, “is detached from the child growing in her and becomes a mere means subservient to the arbitrary gain or desire of others. This contrasts in every way with the fundamental dignity of every human being and with each person’s right to be recognized always individually and never as an instrument for another” (No. 50).

Of course, no amount of money can guarantee how a surrogate mother may feel when the child she has carried, even one she may share no genetic connection to, is born. Some women have immediately regretted their side of a

surrogacy contract and have sought to keep the infant they gave birth to as confounding parental claims are hashed out in court.

Organizers of the Declaration of Casablanca, an international anti-surrogacy campaign, charge that the surrogacy industry violates U.N. conventions protecting the rights of the child and the surrogate mother. Monsignor Miroslaw Wachowski, the undersecretary for relations with states in the Vatican Secretariat of State, endorsed the campaign on April 5, calling for a broad-based civic alliance to stop the “commercialization of life.”

Monsignor Wachowski argued that surrogacy reduces human procreation to a matter of “individual will” and desire, in which the powerful and wealthy prevail. “Parents find themselves,” he said, “in the role of being providers of genetic material, while the embryo appears more and more like an object: something to produce—not someone, but something.”

Kevin Clarke, *chief correspondent, with reporting from The Associated Press.*

The surrogate baby boom at a glance

\$4 billion: global surrogacy market value in 2020

\$14 billion: value in 2022

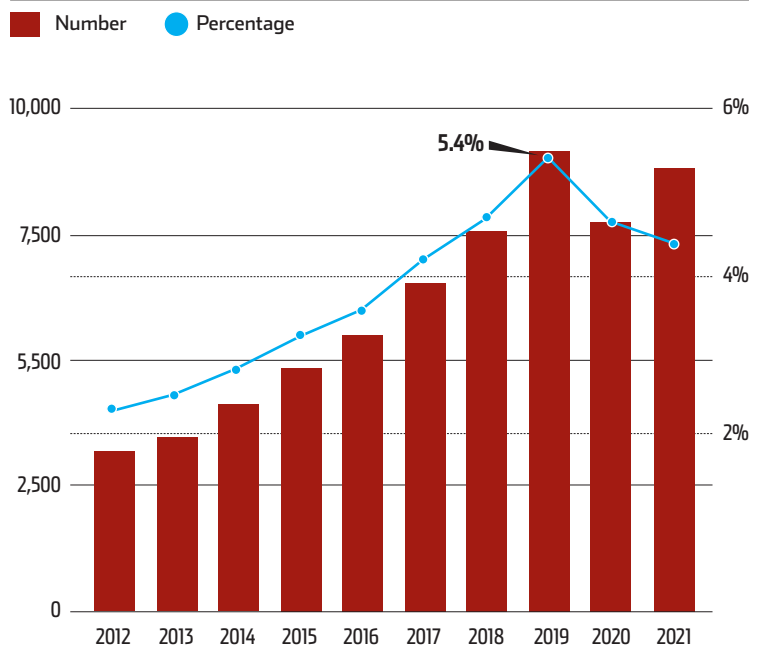
\$129 billion: projected value in 2032

18 percent: share of the worldwide adult population who experience infertility, or roughly one in six people.

\$100,000–\$200,000: cost range for surrogacy in the United States, the highest in the world. A typical compensation fee for the surrogate mother accounts for roughly 50 percent of the overall surrogacy cost.

In 1999, just **1 percent** of “embryo transfer cycles” in the United States—that is, a transfer of an embryo created through in vitro fertilization to a uterus—used a gestational surrogate. By 2019, surrogates were used in **5.4 percent** of those transfers.

Embryo transfers using gestational surrogate



Sources: Global Market Insights, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, World Health Organization, Fertility Clinics Abroad.

Francis becomes first pope to attend G7 summit with a focus on artificial intelligence

In a surprise announcement on April 26, Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni of Italy said that Pope Francis had accepted her invitation to participate in the G7 summit in Italy's Apulia region, to be held June 13 to 15.

"His presence brings prestige to our nation and to the entire Group of 7. It is the first time that a pope will participate in the work of the G7," she said.

On Jan. 1, Italy assumed the presidency of the G7 and will hold that role until the end of this year. As prime minister of Italy, the host nation for the G7 meeting, Ms. Meloni will chair the summit.

The G7 is the group that brings together the heads of state or government of Italy, Canada, France, Germany, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States, seven of the world's most industrialized countries. The president of the European Commission, with its 27 member states, will also take part in the summit.

President Biden is expected to attend with President Emmanuel Macron of France, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak of the United Kingdom and the leaders of the other G7 countries. In addition to Pope Francis, President Javier Milei of Argentina will be one of the guests who are not members of the G7. Francis met with him in the Vatican on Feb. 12.

Pope Francis will likely meet President Biden either at that meeting or in the Vatican. It would be their second encounter since Mr. Biden became president. Francis last spoke to Mr. Biden on Oct. 22, 2023, by phone, when the pope sought to persuade him to try to stop the war in Gaza and find a path to peace. He will likely reinforce that message at their next meeting as well as discuss the war in Ukraine and how to achieve peace there.

Ms. Meloni thanked the pope for accepting the invitation and said, "He will attend the G7 working session, especially that part dedicated to artificial intelligence." She described A.I. as one of the great challenges facing humanity today.

"He will participate in the outreach session that is also open to other invited countries, not just to the G7," she explained.

"I am convinced that his presence will contribute to the formulation of an ethical and cultural framework for A.I.," she added.

She announced the pope's participation in a video message in which she also listed the items that will be on the agenda of the leaders of the G7 summit. Those include: supporting Ukraine and finding a path to lasting peace there; preventing the escalation of conflict in the Middle East; ad-



Pope Francis meets with Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni in Rome on May 12, 2023.

ressing climate change; building more equal relationships with developing countries, particularly in Africa; addressing the migrant crisis and combating human trafficking; and reflecting on the risks and opportunities of artificial intelligence.

With regard to the final agenda item, Ms. Meloni said she intended to bring the Holy See's statement "Rome Call for AI Ethics" to the attention of the G7 participants. The document, signed by the Pontifical Academy for Life, the head of Italy's Ministry for Innovation, A.I. tech leaders and others, attempts to establish the ethical parameters around the use of artificial intelligence.

At a papal audience on March 27, the pope addressed participants in the Minerva Dialogues, an annual gathering of tech leaders and Catholic prelates at the Monastery of St. Mary Sopra Minerva in Rome.

Francis warned of the dangers of artificial intelligence, drawing examples from the biblical Tower of Babel, a lesson about human attempts to rival God. The pope probed for answers about technical matters: Can institutions hold technology companies accountable for the impact of their products? Will artificial intelligence increase inequality?

Francis also expressed concern for the human community. "Could we lose our sense of having a shared destiny?" he asked in his speech. "Our true goal must be for the growth of scientific and technological innovation to be accompanied by greater equality and social inclusion."

Gerard O'Connell, *Vatican correspondent, with reporting from Religion News Service.*



European Parliament calls for a right to abortion as some E.U. states reconsider limits

The abortion debate is heating up in Europe with calls coming from various points on the continent to enshrine abortion access as a right and loosen longstanding restrictions. In April, the European Union's Parliament approved a nonbinding resolution to add "access to safe and legal abortion" to the E.U.'s human rights charter as part of "the right to bodily autonomy [and] to free, informed, full and universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights."

Regulating abortion access has generally been considered outside the scope of the union's mandate, according to pro-life advocates. But the U.S. Supreme Court's *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* decision in June 2022, overturning the *Roe v. Wade* ruling that legalized abortion in 1973, has provoked supporters of abortion access to press for liberalization of abortion laws across the continent.

The question now is how other E.U. bodies, like the governing E.U. Commission, will respond to the Parliament's proposal.

"If the commission continues in the political and ideological line that it currently has, I'm sure it will present a proposal [regarding abortion], and it could also happen that there's a treaty change," said Margarita de la Pisa Carrión, a member of Parliament from the European Conservatives and Reformists Group. "This is why the upcoming

European elections are important."

Ana del Pino, executive director of the One of Us Federation, a pan-European pro-life organization, emphasizes that the parliamentary resolution is merely a political statement.

"It's my personal opinion that abortion advocates in Parliament chose to bring forward this resolution at the end of the legislative period because they are afraid they will lose the left-leaning majority [in the E.U. Parliament] in the upcoming elections. They want to leave the resolution as a kind of road map or statement to the next commission," she told **America**.

Elections to the European Parliament will take place in early June, and political analysts are predicting a shift to the political right that will affect the composition of the incoming E.U. Commission.

Ahead of the June vote, the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Union issued a statement declaring that "abortion can never be a fundamental right."

"We work for a Europe where women can live their maternity freely and as a gift for them and for society and where being a mother is in no way a limitation for personal, social and professional life," the bishops said. "Promoting and facilitating abortion goes in the opposite direction to

In a “March for Life” in Munich on April 13, banners read “Every life is a gift,” “Life is life” and “Euthanasia? No, thanks!”

the real promotion of women and their rights.”

The bishops added that the European Union “cannot impose on others, inside and outside its borders, ideological positions on the human person, sexuality and gender, marriage and family, etc.”

Abortion is legal up to 10 or 14 weeks of pregnancy in all E.U. member states except for Malta, where it is completely prohibited. Responding to moves to expand abortion access, the pro-life movement in Europe has experienced higher numbers of supporters participating in now-annual pro-life marches in many countries. At times, the political back-and-forth on abortion in Europe has come to mirror the U.S. culture war over abortion.

In 2020, the pro-life movement in Poland celebrated a victory when the country’s Constitutional Tribunal prohibited abortion in cases of fetal abnormalities, the most commonly invoked justification for abortion. Now Poland appears poised to liberalize its abortion law. Two legislative proposals would permit abortion through the 12th week of pregnancy—in line with current limits in other European states.

In Germany and Austria, abortion is still technically a criminal act, but prosecution and punishment are suspended when a woman seeks an abortion within the first 90 days of pregnancy. The government tasked an independent commission last year with evaluating German abortion law. The commission returned with a report in April that recommends removing abortion from criminal law, legalizing abortion on demand up to the 12th week of pregnancy and allowing abortion up to the 22nd week under certain conditions still to be determined by legislators.

Bridget Ryder contributes from Spain.



President Joe Biden presents the Presidential Medal of Freedom to Greg Boyle, S.J., at the White House on May 3.

GOODNEWS: Los Angeles Jesuit earns Presidential Medal of Freedom

Gregory Boyle, S.J., a Jesuit priest who founded and runs Homeboy Industries, a gang intervention and rehabilitation program in Los Angeles, was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President Biden on May 3.

In comments at the awards ceremony, Mr. Biden said Father Boyle “changed countless lives” through his ministry with former gang members.

Father Boyle was previously pastor of Dolores Mission Church in Boyle Heights, then the poorest Catholic parish in Los Angeles and a community with the highest concentration of gang activity in the city.

He is the author of several books, including the New York Times best-seller *Tattoos on the Heart: The Power of Boundless Compassion*. He established Homeboy Industries in 1992. The organization has evolved into the largest gang intervention, rehabilitation and re-entry program in the world.

In 2017, Father Boyle wrote in an article for *America* that the most important lesson he learned in 30 years of ministry with gang members and formerly incarcerated people in Los Angeles is that it is not his job to “save” anyone.

“I learned that saving lives is for the Coast Guard,” he wrote. “Me wanting a gang member to have a different life would never be the same as that gang member wanting to have one. I discovered that you do not go to the margins to rescue anyone. But if we go there, everyone finds rescue.”

Former Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, the first and only woman ever elected to the speaker’s post, and Katie Ledecky, the most decorated female swimmer in history, also received the award. The three high-profile Catholics were among a diverse group of 19 people who were honored by the president for “exemplary contributions to the prosperity, values, or security of the United States, world peace, or other significant societal, public or private endeavors.”


OSV News/America staff.



BETWEEN MISSION AND THE MARKET

What happens when a Catholic hospital becomes for-profit?

By Michael O'Loughlin



Only a few years ago, things were looking up for the Catholic Medical Center. The hospital, in the former mill town of Manchester, N.H., had survived the worst of the pandemic and a new chief executive officer was focused on the future. Plans were moving ahead to merge with the state's only academic medical center. C.M.C.'s cardiac care center was regularly voted among the best in the state. And federal grants were helping the hospital invest in its future.

But things took a turn.

State authorities effectively quashed the potential merger in 2022, saying it would violate the New Hampshire state constitution's requirement for "free and fair competition." Following that, a series of investigative articles uncovered abnormally high rates of malpractice settlements from one of the hospital's star heart surgeons. And in April, the hospital announced that continued "financial stress" meant that it would lay off dozens of employees and eliminate some open positions, equating to a reduction of about 140 full-time positions.

C.M.C. leaders say the hospital needs a new way forward if it is to remain sustainable. They announced a new plan last fall, saying that they plan to sell the hospital to a large, for-profit health system, HCA Healthcare, which is a publicly traded company based in Nashville, Tenn., that operates nearly 200 hospitals in 26 states and the United Kingdom. Critics say the move could put the hospital's historic mission at risk by putting profit over patients, but the hospital's leaders say the plan offers C.M.C. a lifeline and a chance to secure a healthy financial future.

Catholic Medical Center traces its roots all the way back to the late 1800s. But like many other modern hospitals, its current incarnation is already the result of a merger. The Sisters of Mercy created what was then called Sacred Heart Hospital in Manchester in 1892, and two years later, the Sisters of Charity of St. Hyacinthe, along with a local parish, opened Notre Dame Hospital. In an effort "to combine resources and medical services," according to C.M.C.'s website, the two hospitals merged in 1974, with the hope of strengthening the local church's ability "to provide patient care in the spirit of Christ."

Alex Walker, the president and chief executive officer of C.M.C., said in a press release last September that the proposed sale of the hospital is in line with the spirit of its founders: "In addition to embracing our Catholic mission, HCA Healthcare also aligns with our

core values and is committed to healthcare excellence, community service, and investing in our people and facilities."

But the proposed sale faces regulatory hurdles. New Hampshire's attorney general, John Formella, told New Hampshire Public Radio in October that the proposal "merit[s] a lot of close scrutiny," particularly around maintaining services and patient affordability. HCA owns other hospitals in New Hampshire, and the company has come under fire after claims it does not adequately staff its hospitals. It also has been criticized for shutting down a labor and delivery unit just two years after buying a hospital and promising to keep it open for at least five years.

If the sale is approved, it would be the latest in a string of formerly nonprofit Catholic hospitals being bought by for-profit companies or private equity firms. These arrangements have been praised by several Catholic hospital leaders as a way for struggling institutions to access much-needed capital. But a formerly nonprofit hospital taking on a for-profit business structure raises questions. Can hospitals originally founded to provide for the health care needs of the poor remain true to their mission if they become part of a corporation whose loyalty is to investors and shareholders?

No Clear Church Teaching

Several Catholic health care experts interviewed for this article said the church offers no prescribed answers when it comes to church-affiliated hospitals joining for-profit companies. That is partly because such a distinction more clearly falls under the jurisdiction of the Internal Revenue Service than that of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. The U.S. tax code offers large tax breaks to charitable organizations, including Catholic and other nonprofit hospitals. When a hospital transitions to a for-profit model, it gives up those tax breaks. But while Catholic teaching may not have much to say about the way the I.R.S. classifies hospitals, leaders in Catholic health care have robustly debated the issue for years.

Seton Hall University hosted a conference in 2012 about the possibility of Catholic hospitals being sold to for-profit companies and whether the mission of those hospitals would be affected by such a sale. In the executive report from the proceedings, the conference hosts noted that several participants decried the possibility that a for-profit hospital that is "Catholic by contract" could be "reduced to mere adherence" to the Ethical

THE PURPOSE IS CONTINUING THE HEALING MINISTRY OF JESUS.



and Religious Directives, a set of guidelines for Catholic health care adopted by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, which would amount to “a moral minimalism.”

But not everyone agreed. Leo P. Brideau, who has headed several Catholic hospital systems, said at the conference that “‘for-profit’ describes our tax status; it doesn’t describe our purpose.” That purpose, he said, “is continuing the healing ministry of Jesus.”


That same year, *Health Progress*, a journal affiliated with the Catholic Health Association, published an article by Kelly A. Carroll, a lawyer and health care ethicist, that asked, “Can For-Profit Catholic Health Care Get the Mission Right?” Ms. Carroll cited a number of Catholic health care ethicists who had argued that for a hospital to retain its true Catholic identity, it must continue to be a nonprofit enterprise. But Ms. Carroll concluded otherwise, arguing that “a for-profit, Catholic-owned health care entity that mindfully embraces the distinctive Catholic identity will retain most of the nonprofit characteristics closely aligned with, and perhaps integral to, the meaningful provision of the good of health care.”

Church teaching doesn’t prohibit Catholic-aligned organizations from operating with a profit-driven structure. The hymnal publisher G.I.A., for example, is a family-owned, for-profit company, and the popular prayer app *Hallow* includes on its website an article explaining why it chose not to incorporate as a nonprofit organization. But

those are different from institutions created by religious orders or dioceses to carry out ministries, argued Michael Rozier, S.J., chair of the health management and policy department at Saint Louis University. Father Rozier said it would be inappropriate for a religious order to establish a ministry and operate under a for-profit structure.

Whether an existing nonprofit Catholic ministry, such as a hospital, can be sold to a for-profit company and still be considered a Catholic ministry is a different question, he said. While Father Rozier has doubts about how well a for-profit system can live out a Catholic mission, the fact that dozens of Catholic hospitals have already joined for-profit systems, often with the support of bishops, suggests that at least as far as church authorities are concerned, it is a possibility.

What happens when a formerly nonprofit Catholic hospital joins a for-profit system? Often, the buyers promise to uphold the Catholic identity of the institution and negotiate with the religious order or diocese about what that looks like. Sometimes it means provisions related to funding pastoral care and chaplaincy departments or even offering daily Mass in a hospital chapel. At a minimum, these arrangements almost always ensure that the new owners will abide by the E.R.D.s. These can be expansive but often boil down to what kinds of procedures Catholic hospitals will not perform, such as abortions. Last year, the U.S. bishops approved a process aimed at reforming the guidelines,



in part because of increased calls for hospitals to perform procedures related to gender identity, which the church generally opposes. But Catholic health care ethicists interviewed for this story said the fact that a for-profit hospital pledges to follow the E.R.D.s does not necessarily mean that the hospital is truly living out its Catholic mission.

Father Rozier said that following the E.R.D.s is a minimum, but for a health care ministry to be considered authentically Catholic, it should also live out the Gospel in its culture and have “a meaningful connection to the institutional church.”

But analyzing the culture of an institution can be difficult.

“In Catholic ministries, we have a commitment to prayerful discernment about how to make decisions,” he said. “When you’re owned by a for-profit company and subject to their strategic decision making, you aren’t doing prayer-based discernment because that’s not part of the culture of the organization.”

When asked if a for-profit hospital or health care system can truly be considered Catholic, M. Therese Lysaught, a professor of health care ethics at Loyola University Chicago’s Neiswanger Institute for Bioethics and Health Care Leadership, put it plainly: “The answer is no.”

The Poor Versus Profit

But Catholic hospitals are not immune from wider market forces. Nearly all Catholic hospitals in the United States were founded by religious orders, partly to offer care for poor immigrants who could not otherwise access care. In the earliest days of their existence, members of those religious orders often staffed the wards, thus cutting down on labor costs. Savings were often passed on to the patients.

This model worked for generations, but as the number of available women religious dwindled, and as advances in health care sent costs skyrocketing, it became financially untenable. This initially meant a wave of mergers and consolidations, creating large Catholic health care systems. And in some instances, formerly independent Catholic hospitals were sold to for-profit systems.

Today, the three largest for-profit systems in the United States—HCA Healthcare, Tenet Healthcare and Community Health Systems, which together own about 8 percent of U.S. hospital beds—all include in their portfolios hospitals that were once Catholic nonprofits.

Dr. Lysaught, who is also a member of the Vatican’s

Pontifical Academy for Life, said the original mission of Catholic hospitals, including their focus on caring for the poor, stands at odds with the goals of for-profit health care systems.

“When [for-profit] organizations take over Catholic institutions, the Catholic mission is pretty much done,” Dr. Lysaught said.

The Catholic Church teaches that accessing health care is “a fundamental right of every human being.” That means that a patient’s ability to pay should not determine whether she or he is able to see a doctor and receive treatment when facing an illness. Critics of for-profit hospitals say that when profit becomes the prime motivation, the quality of services suffers; and, often, for-profit systems close hospitals serving low-income communities.

Several examples seem to back up those criticisms.

A judge in 2013 ruled that HCA failed to follow an agreement it had made to improve several hospitals it purchased in the Kansas City area, ordering the company to pay \$162 million to a foundation charged with making sure the improvements were made.

Citing unsafe working conditions, nurses at St. Vincent’s Hospital in Worcester, Mass., went on a prolonged strike in 2021, saying that the for-profit owner of the hospital, Tenet Healthcare, was not investing in the formerly nonprofit Catholic hospital.

The leader of an HCA-owned hospital in Florida lost her job last year after several physicians complained that the hospital’s focus on profits led to unsafe conditions for patients.

And in North Carolina, the attorney general is suing HCA, claiming the company “degraded” the local nonprofit system it purchased by failing to offer adequate care. “HCA apparently cares more about its profits than its patients,” said Attorney General Josh Stein.

HCA did not reply to an interview request for this story, but representatives have denied to other news outlets any accusations of wrongdoing in each of those instances.

There is no definitive answer to how the health outcomes of patients change when a nonprofit hospital switches to a for-profit mode. But recent studies suggest low-income patients have a more difficult time obtaining care, and another study found that the rate of serious medical complications in patients increases.

This does not mean that a hospital’s nonprofit status insulates it from criticism when it comes to patient access to quality, affordable health care.

In exchange for tax exemption, nonprofit hospitals are required to invest in their local communities, which includes offering charity care to patients who cannot afford



to pay their medical bills. Catholic hospitals pride themselves on the charity care they offer, especially in otherwise underserved areas. But some studies suggest that both for-profit and nonprofit hospitals provide a similarly small amount of charity care.

Last October, Senator Bernie Sanders, an independent from Vermont, released a report skewering nonprofit hospitals for “failing to live up to their end of the non-profit bargain,” citing the relatively low levels of charity care covered by hospitals in relation to executive compensation.

The head of the Catholic Health Association took issue with that assessment. “While Catholic non-profit hospitals provide free and discounted services and make billions of dollars in investments toward community benefit,” wrote Mary Haddad, R.S.M., “others in the healthcare delivery chain [hoard] profits without any expectation they will invest in caring for unserved or underserved patients.”

Sister Haddad continued, “We are committed to a healthcare future that delivers affordable access to care and better health outcomes for patients—and that commitment includes treating patients, regardless of who they are or their ability to pay, and delivering on our mission to prevent patients from going unserved.”

A Cautionary Tale?

The phenomenon of private equity and for-profit systems targeting struggling Catholic hospitals as they seek to expand their market share goes back decades.

Senator Rick Scott, a Republican from Florida, was

chief executive officer of HCA in 1997. Called “the most controversial hospital executive in America,” Mr. Scott approached church leaders in the Archdiocese of Chicago and told them that HCA could offer cash and stability for its 20 Catholic hospitals.

The Rev. Michael Place, who was then the archdiocese’s health care advisor, declined the offer.

“In one sense, a deli is a deli is a deli,” Father Place recounted to *The Chicago Tribune*. “But when you walk into a Jewish deli, you know you’re not in a Greek deli. A hospital defined by its religious ministry is different that way: It’s intangible but real. There is no way we will sell the soul of the deli.”

But beginning in the early 2010s, hospital mergers and consolidations seemed to increase at a rapid pace, and Catholic hospitals no longer were positioned to decline such offers.

The sale of Catholic hospitals in Massachusetts to a private-equity group in 2010 offers perhaps the clearest warning of what can happen when profit seems to take precedence over mission.

Caritas Christi Health was a system of six Catholic hospitals in eastern Massachusetts. The hospitals, which served mostly low-income patients, faced crushing debt and needed cash if they were to stage any kind of turnaround. Dr. Ralph de la Torre, a respected Boston heart surgeon, was hired by the archdiocese in 2008 to take control of the nonprofit system. He said at the time that the debt was too great and required a buyer who could help



FEDERAL OFFICIALS ARE INVESTIGATING THE IMPACT OF PRIVATE EQUITY ON HEALTH CARE SYSTEMS.

restructure the finances and reinvest in the facilities. Two years later, Dr. de la Torre structured a deal to sell the hospitals to Cerberus Capital Management.

Some Catholics criticized the sale at the time, fearful that the sale would threaten the Catholic identity of the hospitals. But neither the archdiocese nor state officials wanted to risk the closure of the hospitals, and the deal was approved.

In the years that followed, a series of controversial real estate transactions extracted wealth from the hospitals and made Cerberus and Dr. de la Torre huge profits. The New York-based private equity company sold its stake in the former Caritas system in 2020 to Steward Health Care, which Dr. de la Torre runs as its chairman and chief executive officer. Reports show that Cerberus made about \$800 million in the sale, more than four times its original investment in the hospitals. Dr. de la Torre's company paid itself a \$100 million dividend. It was around that time, The Boston Globe recently reported, that Dr. de la Torre purchased a yacht estimated to be worth \$40 million.

Last year, Steward announced that its eight hospitals in Massachusetts, most of which were previously Catholic hospitals, faced insolvency. A series of investigative articles published in The Boston Globe reported that the hospitals are understaffed and under-resourced, with patients at risk and the hospitals facing the possibility of being closed. Both state and federal officials have announced investigations into Steward. Federal officials are also investigating the impact of private equity on health care systems, with

some calling for greater regulation to limit private equity's intrusion into the sector.

Dr. de la Torre has defended his company's management of its Massachusetts hospitals, telling The Boston Globe that while he "can appreciate why people are quick to make this criticism," he also believes "there are important facts to consider"—namely, that no one else stepped up to save the struggling hospitals.

Steward, meanwhile, announced on May 7 that it would seek bankruptcy protection. But the company said it would keep operating its Massachusetts hospitals, and state officials said they would hold Steward to that pledge.

A Positive For-Profit Partnership

The Caritas Christi/Cerberus/Steward debacle is an extreme example of a formerly Catholic system falling victim to corporate greed. But other Catholic leaders say that partnering with for-profit companies has offered salvation.

Elizabeth Worley, S.S.J., said she remains confident that a Catholic hospital joining HCA is able to maintain its Catholic identity—because she has seen it firsthand.

Miami's only Catholic hospital, founded by the Sisters of St. Joseph of St. Augustine in 1950, encountered rough financial terrain in the early 2000s. It tried unsuccessfully to merge with a local Baptist system before completing a sale to HCA in 2011.

Representing the Sisters of Saint Joseph during the sale, Sister Worley helped create a covenant agreement with HCA that carved out provisions aimed at maintaining the hospital's Catholic identity.

The agreement signed between the hospital's representatives and HCA ensures that the hospital will maintain a pastoral care department, that a chapel will be open inside the hospital, offering daily Masses in English and Spanish, and that the staff will operate in "full compliance" with the Ethical and Religious Directives, Sister Worley said. Additionally, the hospital's board of directors reserves seats for some sisters, whose religious order remains the canonical sponsor of the hospital. The hospital agreed to continue providing charity care and other community benefits for a number of years, as required for nonprofit hospitals by federal law, though the final agreement did not stipulate that charity care would remain permanent.

The sale to HCA, Sister Worley said, "allowed Mercy Hospital to continue its operations to be successful, to be Catholic in the fullness of its identity, to continue to train leadership in Catholic health care, to maintain its Catholic identity, which was recognized by the local archbishop, [and] to maintain Catholic ministry to our patients."

While the sisters continue to offer formation opportu-



IT IS VERY DIFFICULT FOR INDEPENDENT HOSPITALS TO SURVIVE.

nities for lay employees at the hospital, the day will come in the not-too-distant future when it is likely that those charged with running the hospital will never have had contact with any Sisters of St. Joseph, or even any meaningful connection to the church.

Can that kind of culture be considered Catholic?

“We’re on ground that nobody’s walked on,” Sister Worley said. “So we’re working on it.”

Supporting the Sale

Back in New Hampshire, last September the credit rating firm Moody’s downgraded Catholic Medical Center’s rating, saying that the hospital’s “weak operating performance has driven cash declines and reduced financial flexibility.”

“The strategy of remaining a standalone, independent Catholic hospital in Manchester, New Hampshire, long term, is probably not a winning strategy,” Mr. Walker, the president and chief executive of C.M.C., said in an interview last year with New Hampshire Public Radio.

A few weeks later, C.M.C. announced it would seek to become part of HCA Healthcare. C.M.C. did not make a representative available for an interview. Instead, representatives pointed to a press release in which Mr. Walker said, “We have been on a journey to identify a partner that will, first and foremost, support our mission of health, healing and hope, as well as a partner who will embrace who we are as a Catholic hospital.”

The sale of the hospital to HCA would include provisions that “maintain C.M.C.’s Catholic identity,” establish a nonprofit foundation aimed at contributing to the local community, and “enhance the immediate and long-term financial viability” of the hospital, the hospital said in a press release.

The head of HCA New England Healthcare said in a statement to New Hampshire Public Radio that the company had “great admiration for C.M.C.’s long history of caring for the Manchester community.”

“We believe this partnership will not only preserve C.M.C.’s decades-long commitment to providing high-quality

care in the Catholic tradition, it would also ensure that we can meet the growing demand for quality care here in New Hampshire for years to come,” said Dean Carucci.

C.M.C. and other struggling Catholic hospitals are in an unenviable space. Without investment, it is very difficult for independent hospitals to survive in the current health care landscape. Even wealthy nonprofit systems may face staggering financial losses in the coming years. That means that for some, selling to a for-profit system might appear to be the most attractive option.

Even so, like other Catholic health care ethicists, Father Rozier remains skeptical.

He said the first option for a Catholic hospital seeking a partnership should be an attempt to join an existing Catholic system.

And if that is not possible?

“Then you basically say that we as a church have done everything that we can do here,” Father Rozier said, “and we can no longer fulfill the need that exists.”

That might mean selling the hospital to a for-profit system but without the intention of trying to keep the institution Catholic.

But in New Hampshire, there seems to be a desire to press on. The proposed C.M.C. deal has the backing of New Hampshire’s Catholic bishop, Peter A. Libasci, who frames the sale as one that could bolster Catholic health care in the state for decades to come.

“Unwavering adherence to Catholic moral and ethical principles, and actual practice, in the delivery of health care is a foremost priority for me,” Bishop Libasci said in the press release. “The parties engaged in this endeavor are fully immersed in the process to provide an authentic reflection of the Catholic identity and excellent care that has been provided to the community over the past 131 years.”

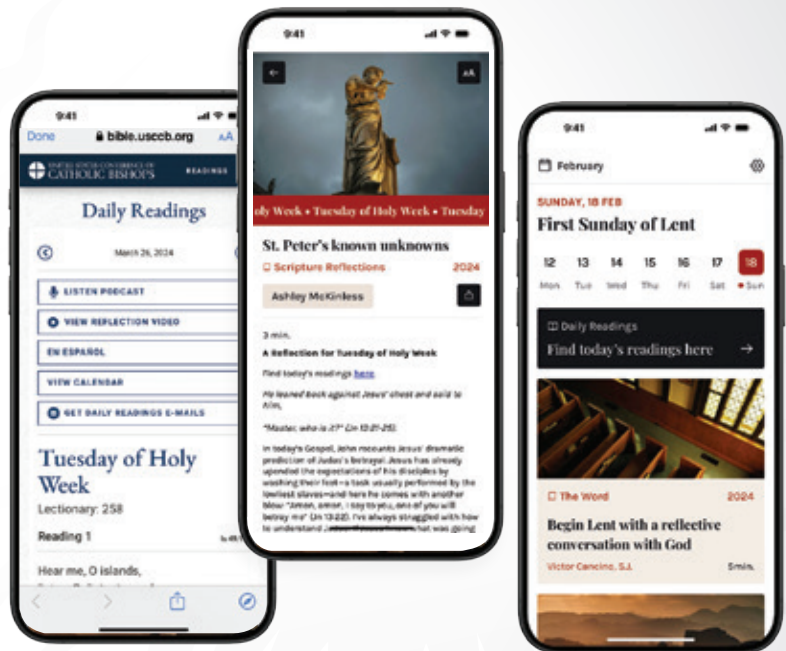
Michael O’Loughlin, *previously the national correspondent for America*, is the executive director of *Outreach: An LGBTQ Catholic Resource* and the author of *Hidden Mercy: AIDS, Catholics, and the Untold Stories of Compassion in the Face of Fear*.

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Elizabeth Asaro (Cross River, NY) is a member of America Media's 1909 Society of those who will leave a legacy gift to the organization.





AN INVISIBLE GRIEF

The church can—and should—do more for families experiencing perinatal loss

By Colleen Jurkiewicz

The first thing they tell you when you have a miscarriage is that it happens all the time.

Statistics vary depending on what source you're looking at, but anywhere from 10 percent to 15 percent of pregnancies will end in what the mother's medical paperwork will dispassionately call a "spontaneous abortion."

That number is getting higher, as medical technology makes it possible for more and more women to become aware of their pregnancies earlier.

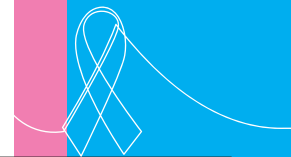
"This happens all the time." I heard it over and over again when I lost our third child four years ago, very early in the first trimester. I heard it so much that I started to repeat it whenever I had to share the news with someone new, parroting what I had been told, trying to seem like I

understood, like I was coping well: "I know this happens all the time."

Like a paper cut, or a stubbed toe.

I began to wonder if I was losing my mind to be so profoundly mourning something that happens all the time. I needed someone to tell me that it was okay that I could not sleep and that I burst into uncontrollable tears when I saw strawberries and tomatoes (which I had craved during the pregnancy).

I was the only one who knew that baby. I was the sole witness to his life. There were no pictures, no keepsakes, no locks of hair. When he was gone, everything changed for me...and very little changed for anyone else. And everyone said: "I'm so sorry," but they were only looking at me when



they said it. I so desperately wanted them to be able to look at the baby, to look at the void he left in the world. I so desperately wanted them to think of him as something that existed outside of my mind. As something more than what happens all the time.

‘This Is a Person in Your Parish’

Miscarriage and stillbirth have been solitary experiences for most of history. Earlier generations of women refrained from talking about the experience openly, even among close friends and female relatives. It is a topic that existed—and to some extent, still does—behind a veil. I know my own grandmother suffered miscarriages only because I heard the advice she passed down to my mother: *Be sure to bless the remains with holy water.*

What a short, succinct missive—and yet, what insight it gives into what she felt. What she lost.

But the world is changing, inside the womb and out. Miscarriage may not be anything new, but knowledge of it is increasing. Medical technology enables women to learn of their own pregnancies even before a missed period. Millennials, in stark contrast to Baby Boomers and even Gen X, grieve transparently. They are talking about their miscarriages not only to their mothers and friends. They are posting about it on social media. And increasingly, Catholic families are turning to the church for accompaniment in their loss.

Is the church ready to give them the support they need?

Not often enough, says Dr. Abigail Jorgensen. A birth worker and sociology professor based in St. Louis, Mo., Dr. Jorgensen started offering her services as a bereavement doula when she was an undergraduate student at the University of Notre Dame. A bereavement doula provides nonmedical support to clients who are experiencing a miscarriage (medically defined as a loss before 20 weeks of gestation) or stillbirth (a loss after 20 weeks’ gestation).

Dr. Jorgensen’s book, *A Catholic Guide to Miscarriage, Stillbirth and Loss: Compassionate Answers to Difficult Questions*, was released by Ave Maria Press in April. The book’s audience is primarily families who have experienced a loss, but Dr. Jorgensen has also included information in each chapter that she hopes is helpful for church ministers who are being called on to provide pastoral support.

“One in four pregnancies ends in a loss—you can’t statistically have a parish that isn’t impacted by perinatal loss,” she said. “This isn’t just a hypothetical person, it’s a

person in your parish. You don’t know which one it may be, but that doesn’t mean they’re not there.”

Over the years, Dr. Jorgensen’s clients have looked to her for both spiritual and logistical support during their losses. “A lot of the times it was people who were like, ‘I really don’t know where my baby’s soul is, and I don’t want to ask my priest because I don’t really know him’—or it was, ‘I don’t know if I get to have a funeral [for my baby] in the Catholic Church; can you help me figure that out?’” she said.

For her Catholic clients, Dr. Jorgensen has often acted as a go-between for the families and the church, reaching out on the family’s behalf so they can focus on their grief. But too often, she said, the response from priests or parish staff has indicated a gross lack of pastoral insight into the gravity of this issue, and a lack of understanding about perinatal loss in general.

One client called her pastor seeking baptism for her stillborn son, Dr. Jorgensen said. The client’s pastor refused, correctly noting that a dead person cannot be baptized, but he did not follow up with the woman in any way or offer to visit the hospital. “To know that information [about baptism] and then to share that information in a pastoral way are two really different things,” said Dr. Jorgensen.

She gets one or two calls a year from women who are confused because a priest has told them their miscarriage is a sin. “I had one client recently whose priest told her that she needed to confess her miscarriage,” she said, noting that the priest used a comparison: “If you accidentally drove over someone with your car, you still have to confess that.”

Catholic teaching is very clear that miscarriage is not a sin, said Joseph Weiss, S.J., a professor of the practice of liturgy at the Clough School of Theology and Ministry at Boston College.

“The definition of a sin is that you consciously, knowingly choose to do something against the will of God. And a miscarriage is a spontaneous response of the woman’s body to something that has gone wrong with the pregnancy,” he said.

Father Weiss said that he has never, in his more than 40 years as a priest, heard of a confessor counseling a penitent to confess their miscarriage. He acknowledges that it may be possible that, if a penitent expresses feelings of guilt and anxiety because of a miscarriage, that a confessor may, out of compassion, allow her to confess it. But the

Christine Sherman with her son. Each rose they hold represents a child Mrs. Sherman lost through miscarriage.



organization, Life's Connection, that would assist us in burying our baby's remains, and I asked if he thought that was an appropriate thing to do.

I held my breath and wondered if he would scoff and tell me that I was crazy to think about giving a burial to what my midwife had called "the products of conception"—or if he, a celibate man, would even understand how that could be possible (it should be noted that I had several friends and family members who did not).

"I think you should name it, and I think you should bury it," he told me when I asked him what he thought I should do, adding that he would make himself available to assist us, and had done so before for other families. He even shared with me that his own mother had suffered several miscarriages, and said he felt blessed by the intercessory prayers of his siblings in heaven.

He gave me exactly what I needed—validation in my

priest's first response, he said, should be to clarify that the miscarriage is not a sin.

"His first response should be: 'No, it is not, because it is an involuntary action. You did not choose to do this,'" he said.

'I Think You Should Name it'

It took me a week after learning that my baby had no heartbeat to get up the courage to send a text to a family friend of ours who is a priest. I wanted to reach out sooner, but I was embarrassed by how upset I was.

It happens all the time, after all.

He called me within a few minutes. I found myself dissolving into tears as I explained the situation, including my fears about whether or not I was blowing this all out of proportion.

He very calmly told me that I was not. "This was yours and Matt's child," I remember him saying reassuringly.

I had previously been put in touch with a very helpful

grief, reassurance that I was not insane to be so upset, and hope for my child's salvation.

When we did bury the baby's remains, my husband and I were the ones to shovel the dirt on top of the small urn that was placed in a family plot. It was hard.

It was also inexpressibly liberating.

As we drove away from the tiny mound of disturbed earth, I felt OK for the first time in weeks.

'No Path for Us'

After I spoke with Dr. Jorgensen about the negative experiences of so many of her clients, I admit that I felt confused. The church had actually been the source of my healing—was I just lucky to get a "good priest"? I wanted to hear what other Catholic women had experienced when they reached out to the church during their times of loss.

What are we doing well? What can we do better?

Ellen Smith was the first woman I interviewed. She



‘It seems like there’s no clear path for what to do when this happens to you.’

and her husband, Matthew, live in northeastern Iowa. They have two living children and have lost 14 children to miscarriage in the first trimester.

One of the particular issues that Mrs. Smith found painful to deal with is the ambiguous language that the church uses when discussing the salvation of unbaptized babies. In 2007, Pope Benedict XVI de-emphasized the concept of limbo in the document “The Hope of Salvation for Infants Who Die Without Being Baptized.” The document states, “there are theological and liturgical reasons to hope that infants who die without baptism may be saved and brought into eternal happiness, even if there is not an explicit teaching on this question found in Revelation.” And later: “The church entrusts to God’s mercy those infants who die unbaptized.”

Mrs. Smith feels that this language “leaves a lot of room for fear and interpretation” and for misuse of the term *limbo*. “It leaves a lot of room for errors or awkward counsel or clueless responses from priests,” she said.

She is also dismayed by the lack of visibility around resources that are available to help families like hers. Her archdiocese has a well-developed parish-based ministry program for families of perinatal loss. However, she did not hear about the ministry until she was at a women’s retreat after her miscarriages had occurred, despite having been in regular contact with her parish every time she suffered a loss.

“I feel like we were just kind of left to figure it out on our own,” she said. “If every diocese has an exorcist, why can’t every diocese have someone who has [information on grief and pregnancy loss] and provides updated information once a year to every church?”

That is a sticking point for Dr. Jorgensen, too. She also believes church leaders and staff members more generally need to have more access to training in how to minister to people experiencing this particular type of loss, as well as

greater knowledge of the resources available to families who have experienced it.

“The parish secretary is not the role you would think needs a ton of pastoral care [training], but it turns out, when someone has a miscarriage or stillbirth and they call the parish, who is the person administering emotional first aid? It’s the parish secretary,” she said.

Christine Sherman found herself in a situation like Mrs. Smith’s. Mrs. Sherman lives in Dallas, Tex., with her husband, Michael, and their son. For her third miscarriage, in 2023, she had to be prescribed misoprostol to pass the baby at home. She wanted to bury the remains of the child, but when she called her parish, it didn’t have any information to offer her, not having a cemetery of its own.

She spent countless hours over the next few weeks calling funeral homes, cemeteries and local organizations trying to find a place to lay her child to rest. Several places quoted her fees in the thousands of dollars. Finally, a priest friend located a cemetery an hour away from the Shermans’ home that would bury the baby for free.

“We just felt like we didn’t know where we fit into the church,” Mrs. Sherman said. “It seems like there’s no clear path for what to do when this happens to you. Most other things, if you call your church, they tell you you’re going to do A, B, C. There was no path here.”


Jessica Hobbs was working for the Diocese of Charleston in South Carolina when she experienced her miscarriage in 2009. She did not know at the time that she had the option to collect the baby’s remains and bury them. She still regrets not doing so, she said.

“I think that’s where the Catholic Church fails, is that women don’t know what to do,” she said. “We catechize [on the dignity of all human life], we do all these things, but we never tell people what to do [when miscarriage occurs].... The couple who has just lost a baby, their first call should be the church. It just didn’t dawn on me—that should be my first thing that I do.”

‘This Generation Is Different’

This seemed a consistent refrain of the women with whom I spoke: The resources, if they existed, were complicated to access if you were not already “in the know.” Almost every woman who finally found the support she needed found it only because she was already personally friends with a priest.

Too often, “the church is being reactive instead of proactive,” said Kelly Breaux, president of Red Bird Ministries, a Catholic grief support ministry that accompanies couples who have lost children at any stage, from pregnancy to adulthood. “We miss those opportunities to be able to tell people ahead of time—if this has happened to you or if it



There's an increasing pastoral need to make these rites known.

happens to you, we are here to support you, and we want to walk with you.”

In recent years, church leaders have begun to take note, though the information does not always make it to the parish level.

“Ten to 12 years ago, in the national conferences [for pro-life directors], we’d start seeing presentations about miscarriage ministry and things like that—meaning the church has to be aware of these children and that their lives are equally precious and need to be commemorated and mourned as well as the children lost to abortion,” said Lisa Everett, director for marriage and family ministry in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend.

I reached out to Ms. Everett because I was impressed by the resources for perinatal loss that were offered on the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend’s website. Those resources exist under the ministry Ava’s Grace, which Ms. Everett developed in memory of her stillborn granddaughter.

The Ava’s Grace web page also includes a document that details liturgical rites that can be used in cases of miscarried or stillborn babies.

“Over the years I had noted that most Catholics—whether lay or clergy, including very devout families—simply were not aware of all the liturgical and funerary options that are available in the case of miscarriage or stillbirth,” said Brian MacMichael, director of the Office of Worship for the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, who created the document. “We seem to be talking more openly nowadays about miscarriages.... I do think there’s an increasing pastoral need to make these rites known, because they provide both a spiritual balm and a sense of closure, just as a funeral does after any death.”

“The previous generation, they didn’t even talk about it,” said Amy Huschka, a mom of five who lives in Wichita, Kan. She said her own mother told her: “I didn’t even tell my mom I had a miscarriage—it was a silent thing. Nobody

spoke about it. You just didn’t talk about it.” Ms. Huschka said she told her mother: “This generation’s different. Our generation talks about things a lot more. I’ve got people coming up to me telling me their story...and they’re not getting the support they need from the church.”

Ms. Huschka was living in Houston, Tex., when she experienced her miscarriage in 2011. At the emergency room, where she was being treated for blood loss, medical staff kept asking if she wanted them to take away the baby’s remains. “We just kept saying no, because I knew it wasn’t a Catholic hospital, and I had no idea what they were going to do with the body,” she said. “I said, ‘No, we’ll call our priest and we’ll take care of that on our own.’”

But when she called her priest to ask if it was possible to bury the baby in the parish cemetery, he said he would pray for them but couldn’t offer anything more than that.

“That was very, very hard,” she said.

Carving Mount Rushmore

In the weeks following the Dobbs decision in 2022, I saw countless social media posts from secular, pro-abortion groups that questioned why, if the Catholic Church was so sure a fetus was a person, it did not provide miscarried and stillborn babies with burial. I was deeply irritated because I knew that the church *did* offer this option, and I had seen it with my own eyes. The treatment that representatives of the church gave my loss was completely consistent with a belief that that loss was a human death.

But it is not enough that my situation—and I am sure, that of many others—was handled correctly. Nor is it fair to assume that the priests and lay ministers who falter in their pastoral responses to these situations are hypocrites. They, too, are human beings who find themselves in a situation they do not know how to navigate. Still, it is imperative that all of us together work to ensure that our priests, our lay ministers and our communities are showing up to support each and every mother of miscarried and stillborn babies.

Mrs. Breaux believes that there needs to be a multifaceted approach to equipping everyone in the church with knowledge about perinatal loss—from greater emphasis on the subject for couples in marriage preparation to more technical knowledge for priests and lay ministers.

“It’s like carving Mount Rushmore,” she said, referring to the breadth of the task. “These are conversations that we need to have during Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Month, which is in October—we should be preaching about the things that we can offer as a church. On Bereaved Mother’s Day, the week before Mother’s Day, we should be talking about how much the church mourns with these families.... [Priests] need more education and formation on what actually happens [physically] to understand what the

family is going to experience.”

Everyone experiences loss “uniquely as a person,” said Dr. Marie Pitt-Payne, academic dean at the University of St. Mary of the Lake in Mundelein, Ill., noting that what might be helpful to one person may be less so to another. “There is no cut and dried ‘this is how you handle’ a miscarriage or infant death, she said. “So what really needs to be cultivated is the art of encounter.”

The seminary at Mundelein currently has over 120 seminarians in formation for almost 30 dioceses, and Dr. Pitt-Payne believes that it is crucial to equip them with information on how to accompany families who face perinatal loss.

Seminaries and formators need to take a “multifaceted” approach to helping their students learn how to accompany families through perinatal loss, Dr. Pitt-Payne said. At U.S.M.L., she has brought in speakers to share their personal experiences with the seminarians, and she has also broached the topic in the classroom, creating a case scenario that calls for students to research different pastoral strategies a priest can use in these instances. The specific topic of miscarriage has not been a focus in the seminary’s *Cor Iuxta Meum* Simulation Center, where seminarians navigate different pastoral scenarios with the help of trained actors, but Dr. Pitt-Payne does not rule out that possibility in the future.

A Question of Life and Death

Several months after Ms. Hobbs experienced her miscarriage, a priest friend offered a Mass for her baby, and a coworker from the Diocese of Charleston gave her a “certificate of life” to commemorate the child’s memory. She still treasures it.

Certificates of life are commemorative documents that recognize the life of a miscarried baby. Red Bird Ministries and many other organizations offer some version of this keepsake for grieving families, and they can also be created using basic templates found online. Earlier this year, the English government announced that it would be offering optional “baby loss certificates” for any family who experiences the loss of a child before 24 weeks’ gestation.

The certificate was very meaningful to her, Ms. Hobbs said: “Because there’s no death certificate, and there’s no birth certificate. One of the hardest things for me was that it was like she didn’t exist.”

I asked Dr. Jorgensen if she feels the outcomes of these pastoral situations are largely dependent on how seriously the church takes a woman and her experiences.

Yes and no, she said. Certainly, it pertains to women’s personal experiences—but more correctly, “it has to do with the very fundamental question of life and death.”



Jessica Hobbs with her family. Several months after Ms. Hobbs experienced her miscarriage, a priest friend offered a Mass for her baby, and a coworker from the Diocese of Charleston gave her a “certificate of life” to commemorate the child’s memory.

“Loss affects families, loss affects dads,” she said. “Loss affects older siblings, loss affects grandmas and grandpas and aunts and uncles—and all the people who could have gotten to know that kid and didn’t.”

I am not embarrassed anymore over the sorrow I felt—and still feel—because of my miscarriage. Yes, it happens all the time. No, not like a paper cut, and not like a stubbed toe. A death. Death happens all the time, too, and it is always hard.

My baby was a person only I could see. What I really, really needed from the church was assurance that others saw my child, too. That it valued him, too. It lost him, too.

And that is what the church gave me.

That is what we need to give every mother.

Colleen Jurkiewicz is a staff writer with *The Milwaukee Catholic Herald*. She contributes weekly to LPi’s blog (*Practicing Catholic*).



DIVIDING THE CHURCH ON BRAIN DEATH

The misguided attempt to stop organ donation among Catholics

By Jason T. Eberl, Becket Gremmels, Michael F. Olson, E. Wesley Ely, John J. Raphael, Allen J. Aksamit and Laura B. Webster

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Advances in medicine over the past 50 years represent a shining example of the power of combining humanism and science to save lives and foster love. St. John Paul II celebrated these developments and emphasized the need to use them responsibly when he stated in 2000:

Medical science, for all the hope of health and life it offers to many, also presents certain critical issues that need to be examined in the light of a discerning anthropological and ethical reflection... It is evident that every medical procedure performed on the human person is subject to limits (“Address to the 18th International Congress of the Transplantation Society,” No. 2).

When those limits are followed, medicine can serve its goal of defending and promoting human dignity and, when appropriate, “acceptance of the human condition in the face of death” (“Evangelium Vitae,” No. 65).

This brings us to the complicated dynamics of declaring death in an increasingly technologically complicated set of clinical circumstances. The Catholic Church, as al-

ways, is offering a significant contribution to this ethical conversation, and we believe it is time to offer clarification in light of some well-intended but misguided advice from voices within the church. Such clarification is based on our collective expertise as members of the clergy, clinicians and ethicists because understanding the issues at hand requires a multidisciplinary approach that is both theoretically and practically well-informed.

The authors and signatories of a recently published document called “Catholics United on Brain Death and Organ Donation: A Call to Action” have condemned the use of neurological criteria for determining that patients have died and the view that it is ethically permissible to recover their vital organs in these circumstances if they or their loved ones have consented to donation. Their statement concludes that Catholics should conscientiously refuse permission for such neurological testing and that Catholic health care practitioners should refuse to use such criteria to declare someone dead. Consequently, they also call upon Catholics to refuse to be organ donors.

First of all, the document’s title is a misnomer. Far from promoting unity within the church, it will undoubt-



Making brain death the latest battlefield in the culture wars places an undue burden on grieving families.

edly create disunity, confusion and even scandal among the faithful. For example, there is widespread public confusion regarding the colloquial term *brain death*. The use of this term often incorrectly conflates those declared dead using neurological criteria with patients in a persistent vegetative state, like Terri Schiavo, whose death in 2005 followed intense debate both within and outside of the church. Her brother, Bobby Schindler, is one of the statement's signatories. The misappropriation of the term *brain death*, even by medical professionals, leaves many vulnerable to being exploited by fear.

Moreover, although the list of signatories includes several health care professionals, we are aware of Catholic neurologists, critical care and transplant physicians, and ethicists working in Catholic health care who were approached and explicitly chose not to sign the document because they adamantly disagreed with it on medical and bioethical grounds. There is an evident lack of insight in the statement regarding the realities of clinical practice and how determination of death by neurological criteria and organ recovery actually works in hospitals. There is a strong difference between theory and practice.

At the centerpiece of the statement is the concern that the current Uniform Determination of Death Act, the model legislation first crafted in 1981 and thereafter adopted by every U.S. state and territory, is being routinely violated because it requires irreversible loss of "all functions of the entire brain." If, as the statement notes, more than half of patients declared dead using neurological criteria have persistent neuroendocrine function via the hypothalamus, then, they argue, the U.D.D.A. criterion is not being met. However, from the beginning this criterion has never been understood to entail that every single part of the brain must have irreversibly ceased functioning for death to be declared. As neurologist James Bernat and others have argued since the early 1980s, specific *critical functions* of the brain need to remain intact for a human body to be alive.

If we stipulate that every last neuron in the brain must cease firing before we declare someone dead, we would have to abandon even traditional cardiopulmonary means of determining death and await the onset of putrefaction. This cannot be what St. John Paul II meant when he said, in an address to the International Congress of the Transplantation Society in 2000, "complete" cessation of brain activity is morally required. He said as much himself in that address when he acknowledged that scientific approaches to ascertaining death had "shifted" from cardio-respiratory signs to neurological criterion:

Specifically, this consists in establishing, according to clearly determined parameters commonly

held by the international scientific community, the complete and irreversible cessation of all brain activity (in the cerebrum, cerebellum and brain stem). This is then considered the sign that the individual organism has lost its integrative capacity (No. 5).

This has long been the understanding of the U.D.D.A.'s requirement regarding "all functions of the entire brain." It was always meant to clarify that both the cerebrum and the brain stem must be dead, and that being in a persistent vegetative state does not constitute death.

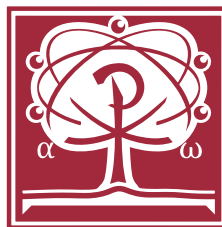
Does the Hypothalamus Fulfill a Critical Function?

Discussions about including the hypothalamus and other parts of the diencephalon in brain death testing were well known at the time of St. John Paul II's statement in 2000, as well as the "legal clinical mismatch" between what the U.D.D.A. requires for death to be declared by neurological criteria and what is done in clinical practice, where testing for hypothalamic function has never been required for determination of death. Why is this the case? It is because the hypothalamus does not play a central role in preserving the human organism's integrative unity. The hypothalamus produces hormones related to reproduction and puberty, and it tells the body to manage its fluid homeostasis, temperature, satiety, sleep and blood pressure. These are vegetative functions but not functions fundamental for life in the way that brainstem-coordinated circulation of oxygenated blood and respiration are.

Indeed, people can live well without a hypothalamus (e.g., after removal from surgery due to a tumor extraction) with exogenous hormonal replacement. The brain's other structures can be irreversibly destroyed (with no potential for recovery) and the hypothalamus can be preserved because of collateral blood flow from blood vessels external to the brain if organ support is maintained via IV fluids and a ventilator to stabilize blood pressure and oxygen levels. This is similar to medical technology that allows a heart to

Continued on Page 36

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Dear friends,

As President of the **Pontifical Academy for Life**, I ask you to share an initiative that we consider of great importance for our society.

This is the worldwide campaign "Thank you, doctor" (**ThankYouDoctor.org**), with the aim of promoting the humanizing role of the primary care physician, also known as family doctor, in the healthcare system and in society. This initiative was born with the blessing of Pope Francis.

The crisis in the healthcare system in many countries often has a common cause: the lack of recognition of the fundamental role of the general practitioner. To meet this challenge, representatives of the health sector, civil society and various religious denominations have come together to draw up a **"Rediscover the Family Doctor" Declaration**, -a call to governments, public institutions, and health systems to reestablish the central role of the primary doctor.

The Pontifical Academy for Life has received from the Pope the mandate to "promote and defend human life". The academicians who form part of this institution are chosen, without any religious discrimination, from among ecclesiastical, religious and lay personalities of different nationalities, experts in disciplines related to human life (medicine, biological sciences, theology, philosophy, anthropology, law, sociology, etc.).

I therefore strongly invite all the institutions involved in the service of our society and the representatives of the various religions to participate in this campaign by showing their support for the **"Rediscover the Family Doctor" Declaration**.

The campaign, promoted by the non-profit association **SOMOS Community Care**, which brings together more than 2,200 doctors who treat immigrant patients in New York, has the support of institutions, associations and organizations such as the World Federation of Catholic Medical Associations, the National Federation of Italian Doctors, hospitals, medical schools, patients' associations.

It would be a great joy for us to be able to count your organization among those expressing support for the Declaration.

Sincerely yours,

Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia
President of the Pontifical Academy for Life



SCAN THE QR TO LEARN MORE

Rediscovering the Family Doctor

BY MARIO J. PAREDES

Hippocrates, the Greek father of modern medicine, said, “Wherever the art of Medicine is loved, there is also a love of Humanity”... and how important it is these days to have a clear vision of what the art of Medicine is. How important it is to show humanity when caring for our sick sisters and brothers, all children of the same Father! How easy it is to forget the humanization of medicine when other interests are in the way of our well-being.

SOMOS Community Care and Dr. Ramon Tallaj Foundation, together with the Pontifical Academy for Life launched an urgent appeal to rediscover the figure of the family doctor, a decisive factor in the humanization of our societies. This appeal occurs amid our uncertain times when we are all called upon to face dramatic crises in the fields of health, the economy, immigration, the environment, and war.

As Pope Francis said to SOMOS colleagues during our private audience in September 2019, “We stand convinced that the rediscovery and requisite recognition of the role of the family doctor and his or her relationship with the patient can emerge as a decisive factor in humanizing our societies, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic.”

Three main motives inspired the official letter signed by H. E. Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia, President of the Pontifical Academy of Life:

- Since the times of Hippocrates, **the patient-doctor relationship has formed the very heart of the healthcare model**, a priority that we must not only respect, but we also must support and enhance, as the World Health Organization states. On the other hand, due to an inadequate misunderstanding of the humanizing vocation of healthcare in recent years, many social workers and health practitioners have embraced other priorities, which has worsened the quality of our wellness, putting at risk a large population, specifically the discarded and vulnerable fellow humans.
- The doctor-patient relationship also forms the foundation of a healthcare system that adopts and **prioritizes prevention and a holistic vision of health**. Based on the Pontifical Council for Pastoral Assistance to Health Care Workers, the doctor who accompanies their patient and their patient’s family in life forms part of a unique humanizing heritage, not only for the healthcare system, but also for society itself. The physician promotes a harmonious vision of health in the context of a healthy life, recognizing each person’s intrinsic value and the decisive nature of family relationships. This way, the doctor contributes to basing the healthcare system on prevention. When we lose the doctor-patient relationship, or when it breaks down, healthcare is relegated to intervening only when the patient’s situation has already degenerated. We all face extremely high human and social costs.

- The doctor-patient relationship, finally, **constitutes an antidote for healthcare systems so they do not become conditioned to interests other than the health and well-being of citizens**. At times, when we set aside this relationship, healthcare systems condition their objectives on the profit motives of people or companies within their sector. Neglect of this relationship has also sometimes led to the politicization of healthcare, bartering the needs of doctors and patients.

Pope Francis himself has lamented that “the figure of the family doctor has almost disappeared,” which risks “the good quality of territorial health services.” His Holiness goes on to say that “these are so bureaucratized and computerized that the elderly or poorly educated find themselves effectively excluded or marginalized.”

At the same time, the Declaration shown here recognizes the daily role that millions of doctors play across all five continents, not only in serving as the front line of our healthcare systems, but also when they go above and beyond, transforming themselves into the “good Samaritans” for every person.

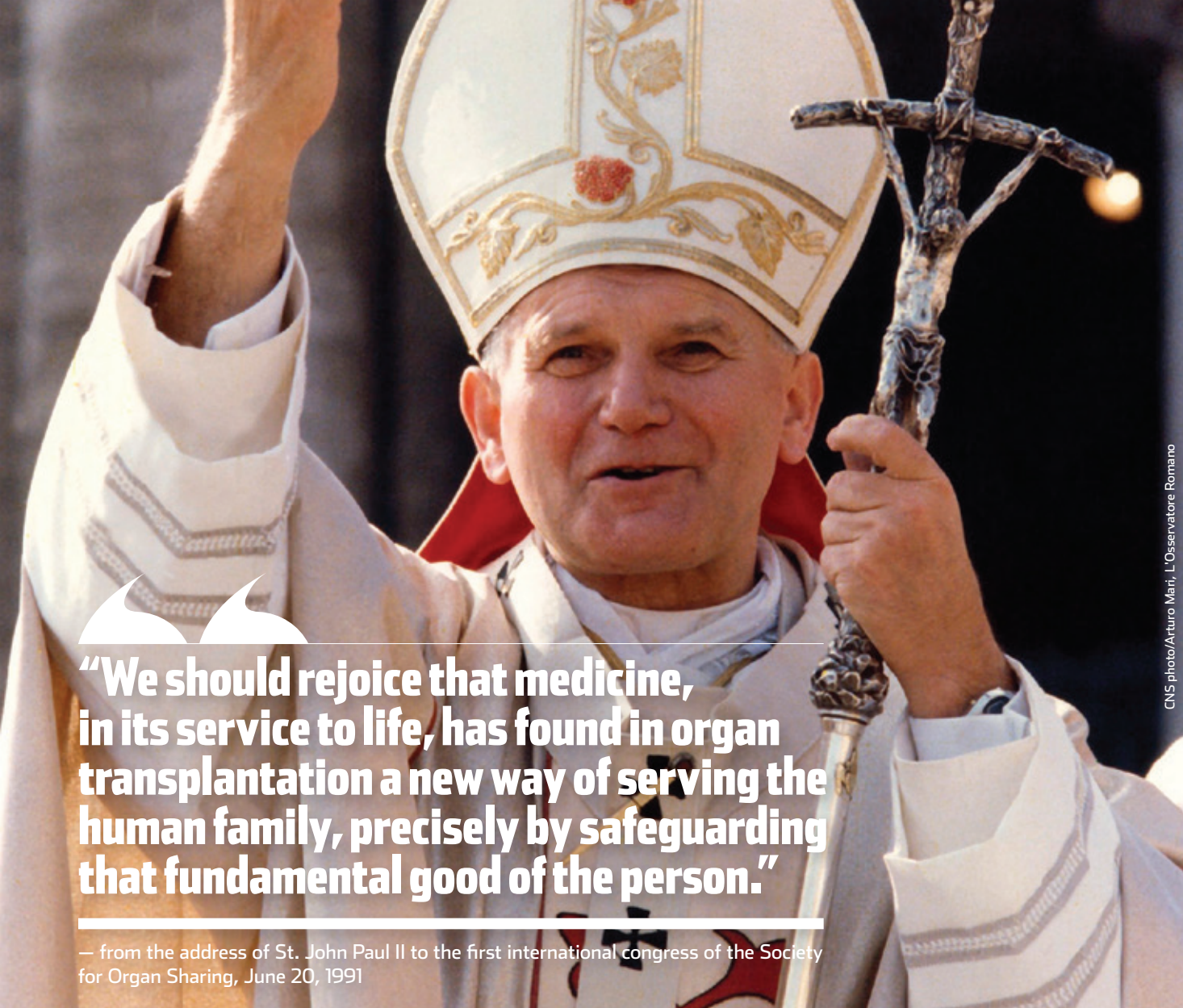
We were lucky to have the opportunity to present the Declaration to Pope Francis during a private audience with three hundred doctors and healthcare representatives. Pope Francis was eager to encourage all attendees to keep working hard to get involved in the humanization of medicine and the prevention of disease.

From SOMOS Community Care, we take Pope Francis’s message and encourage you to sign this Declaration by visiting [Thankyoudoctor.org](https://www.thankyoudoctor.org) and join the more than one million individuals and organizations all over the world that endorse the role of the family doctor. Organizations such as the NYS Academy of Family Physicians and the World Council for Health are among those that understand the importance of a doctor that not only identifies health issues but is part of the individual’s family life and that acknowledges the role of the social determinants of health in all of us.

Thank you for your support.



Mario J. Paredes,
SOMOS Community Care, CEO



CNS photo/Arturo Mari, L'Osservatore Romano

“We should rejoice that medicine, in its service to life, has found in organ transplantation a new way of serving the human family, precisely by safeguarding that fundamental good of the person.”

— from the address of St. John Paul II to the first international congress of the Society for Organ Sharing, June 20, 1991

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beat in a box outside the body, as in cardiac transplantation. Clearly a heart outside of a body is not a living person, yet the heart’s tissue and neural pathways can be stimulated to make the heart beat.

Thus, while it is the case *anatomically* with hypothalamic function preserved that not all functions of the entire brain have ceased, it is the case *functionally* that patients determined to be dead by neurological criteria “will never regain consciousness or breathe independently again, irrespective of whether neuroendocrine function is present or not.”

If St. John Paul II meant to include the hypothalamus in the above listing for brain death, or similar neuroendocrine structures like the pituitary gland, surely he would have done so. Instead, he went on to say, “With regard to the parameters used today for ascertaining death—whether the

‘encephalic’ signs or the more traditional cardio-respiratory signs—the Church does not make technical decisions” (“Address to the 18th International Congress of the Transplantation Society,” No. 5). The pope here reflects the wisdom of St. Augustine when he warned, in his *Literal Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, against Christians speaking about scientific matters outside of their expertise, lest they be laughed at and the faith be scandalized (Book I, Chapter 19, Paragraph 39).

We thus come to the crucial question of the role of the hypothalamus with respect to the *integrative unity* of a living human body. Does the hypothalamus fulfill a *critical function* in terms of bodily integration, control or behavior? For the reasons outlined above, it is evident it does not. While undoubtedly playing an important role in the vegetative effects of the brain, there is no evidence that hypothalamic function is either necessary or sufficient for the

persistent integrative life of a mature human organism.

In fact, it is not substantively different from the function of other endocrine glands like the adrenal glands that lie above the kidneys, yet no one believes testing for adrenal function is relevant for determining death.

Thus, the authors of the statement “Catholics United on Brain Death and Organ Donation: A Call to Action” seem to mistake the hypothalamus’s location as being more relevant than its function. This is why some other legal jurisdictions, such as the United Kingdom, require only irreversible cessation of brainstem function, given its unique and irreplaceable role in preserving and regulating cardio-pulmonary function.

It is also worth highlighting, as the statement’s authors note, that assessing hypothalamic function has not been included as a requirement for determining death going back to the 1995 guidelines from the American Academy of Neurology. So why has attention now been drawn to this small area of the brain? One speculative explanation is the increasingly deep-seated attitudes that inform America’s current culture wars, leading to an overarching hermeneutic of suspicion regarding the A.A.N. criteria and the medical profession in general. The scrupulous fear that giving the gift of oneself through organ donation to extend the lives of others will prematurely cause one’s own death ends up fomenting fear, discord and disunity within the church.

The arguments against the use of neurological criteria have yet to prove persuasive to either the medical community or the church’s magisterium after multiple studies in the 1980s and 2000s by the Pontifical Academy of Sciences. Thus, while we agree that the current neurological criteria should continue to be critically examined and refined where needed, and that there needs to be legal and moral accountability to ensure the integrity of how death is ascertained, it is inappropriate to reject the clinical use of neurological criteria altogether and sow distrust between Catholics and their health care providers, as well as Catholic hospitals and society as a whole, by calling for conscientious refusal of neurological determination of death and organ donation.

The potential ramifications of such confusion and distrust are manifold, not only with respect to organ donation—about 2 percent of all in-hospital deaths are declared using neurological criteria; only about 20 percent of the patients declared dead using neurological criteria become organ donors—but more especially regarding family decision-making concerning continued technological intervention to sustain vegetative operations. Rather than accepting the reality that natural death has occurred and maintaining faithful hope in a future resurrection, families may feel compelled to cling to the false hope of their loved

one’s technologically mediated recovery, as witnessed in the recent case of Jahi McMath.

Promoting such false hope, by making brain death the latest battlefield in the ongoing culture wars, places an undue burden on families at a time of immense grief when they are most in need of clear pastoral guidance and the healing that comes from accepting our mortality while faithfully acknowledging that death is not final—this is the church’s unified Gospel message.

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Pisma Archiv/Alamy

Migration Promotes Conversion

From the beginning of Christian history, evangelization has depended on the movement of peoples

By Peter C. Phan

Philip Bump, a columnist for The Washington Post, reported on Jan. 15, 2024, that nearly half of American adults (about 25 percent of Democrats and over 75 percent of Republicans) agree with Donald Trump that immigrants entering the United States illegally are “poisoning the blood” of the country.

Another poll, the Public Religion Research Institute’s 2020 Census of American Religion, showed that 70 percent of Americans identified themselves as Christian. This suggests that a sizable percentage of American Christians agree with Mr. Trump’s racist pronouncement. As a Catholic migrant several times over myself, I wonder how early Christians would have reacted to this and what they would

have considered the best remedy for the poisoning of the blood of Christ.

It might surprise (white) American Christians that the early Christians were mostly migrants. The author of the first book of Peter addresses his letter to Christians who lived as “strangers/exiles” (*parepidēmoi*) in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia (1:1). Later, he calls them “resident aliens” (*paroikoi*) and, again, “strangers” (2:11).

These terms were later interpreted in the spiritual sense to mean that Christians are earthly pilgrims toward heaven, but the New Testament scholar John H. Elliott persuasively argues that “strangers” and “aliens” refer to Christians in their actual political, legal and social status, both before and after their conversion. There are two other Greek terms to refer to Christians: *allos*, *allos* (*allos*, other, stranger) and *xenos* (foreigner; from this term, we have “xenophobia,” fear or hatred of the stranger). This vocabulary clearly demonstrates that the early Christians were migrants.

This was true of the community of Christians in Rome, which was likely founded by migrant Jewish-Christian converts and, by the third century, boasted the largest Christian group in the empire. Christian migrants, especially from the eastern part of the Roman Empire, were attracted to Rome because the city was populated by migrants and enjoyed a vibrant religious diversity into which

A relief from a fourth-century sarcophagus depicts Jesus in a boat with John, Luke and Mark.

the new religion could insert itself and attract converts. Until the middle of the third century, the common language for Christian migrants there was Greek, not Latin (just as Spanish, not English, is the common language of many immigrants in the United States today).

A Fundamental Part of Christian Life

It is important to note that this condition of being a migrant was not limited to a group of Christians or a particular time but belongs to the very nature of Christianity. Indeed, I would argue for two axioms. First, Christian mission induces migration, and, conversely, migration fulfills Christian mission. Second, there is a reciprocal cause-and-effect relationship between Christian mission and migration. The more Christian mission expands, the more migration of Christians occurs, and the more migration of Christians occurs, the more Christian mission expands.

It is customary to think that Christian missions began first in Palestine and spread from there to the West, at the center of which stood Rome; in this understanding, these missions were undertaken, or at least initiated, by popes, “successors of Peter,” and by bishops, “successors of the apostles,” to bring the faith to the rest of the globe. Such top-down historiography of Christian missions may be said to be hagiographic, focusing on saints and heroes (in today’s parlance, stars and celebrities). Such a narrative makes for fascinating and edifying reading, especially if it is adorned with miracles and heroic feats. Unfortunately, it ignores the indispensable on-the-ground contributions of rank-and-file Christian migrants, male and female, whose work has not been recorded in the official annals of missions. Without these mostly anonymous migrants, Christian missions would not have borne permanent fruit.

After Emperor Constantine’s conversion (in 312) and the Edict of Milan that tolerated Christianity a year later, conversion to Christianity no longer led to personal and social persecution, and the Christian community grew exponentially. By the beginning of the third century, Christians were estimated at 0.35 percent of the population of the empire; by the year 250, about 2 percent; by 300, 10.5 percent; and by 350, 56.5 percent.

Such phenomenal growth has been attributed to extraordinary hierarchical leadership, but it cannot be accounted for by that alone, however able those leaders might have been. The hierarchy simply could not accomplish this phenomenal growth, given the scant number of bishops, their general lack of physical mobility, the relative absence of personal contact and the means of social communication



The more Christian mission expands, the more migration of Christians occurs.

between them and the non-Christians to be converted, the severe impediments caused by persecutions, and the vast and far-flung geography of the Roman Empire.

Migrants and Christian Mission

To account fully for the astounding expansion of early Christianity and the enormous rate of conversion throughout the Roman Empire and beyond, another group of Christian agents must be given credit: the migrants. Ubiquitous and, indeed, constituting the majority of the Christian population, they constantly crisscrossed Syria, Asia Minor, Greece, Italy, and the main Mediterranean cities such as Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria, Ephesus, Corinth, Philippi and Rome.

In the second century, these migrant Christians penetrated the distant provinces of Egypt, Syria, Gaul and North Africa. By the year 300, Christianity entered Spain and Brittany. At the same time, remarkably, it spread toward the East, beyond the borders of the Roman Empire, into the Persian Empire; Edessa, the capital of the kingdom of Osroene; Armenia and Georgia in the Caucasus region; and eventually as far as India and China, along the Silk Road and by the sea route.

The sociologist Rodney Stark has argued that conversion in the first three centuries was most often the result of person-to-person contacts. David W. Kling affirms in *A History of Christian Conversion* that “the faith spread primarily through personal contact among family members and friends, between slaves, at social events, in the army, in the workplace, through travel and trade, and even during war.” If so, the conclusion that “migration promotes conversion” is inescapable. Migrants, represented by the categories of people and in the circumstances described above, and not official church officials, played a preponderant role in spreading the Christian faith. How? By “gossiping the Gospel” to fellow migrants and the natives of the lands they passed through or in which they settled as they went about their daily business.

Most often, they were not commissioned by church officials to go on missions to the “pagans,” and they far out-



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numbered those who were. They were simply migrants, traveling hither and thither for the same mundane businesses as their non-Christian counterparts, and they lived the Christian faith without ostentation among the people they met or shared life with. Inevitably, their neighbors, friends and colleagues would be curious about their faith and way of life and no doubt would inquire about it. Most likely, these Christians were not equipped to give a full explanation and intellectual defense of their faith unless they were highly educated; nevertheless, they would bear faithful witness to God and Jesus with their behavior and distinctive way of life.

Were their numbers large enough, they would, on their own initiative, form a community for common worship and prayer, and whenever possible, would send for a priest or monk from their home countries to teach the faith, administer the sacraments and cater to spiritual needs. Religious specialists rarely preceded the migrants; at best, they accompanied them, and more often, it was the latter who facilitated their missions. At times, finances permitting, they would build churches, remnants of which still dot the Silk Road and other locales far from Rome. In this way, they laid the foundations for the establishment of Christianity wherever they went.

To be a migrant was to be a missionary, and migration

promoted conversion. Given this intimate theological and historical connection between Christian mission and migration, not least in the United States, Christians must firmly condemn any demonization of migrants, not simply for political reasons but in the name of the Christian faith. Such demonization poisons not only the blood of the country but the blood of Christ. We Christians eat Christ's body and drink his blood sacrilegiously, to our damnation, if we allow the bacteria of anti-immigrant rhetoric to introduce poison into that body and blood. Left untreated, that racist poison will be fatal to Christ's body, the church.

Peter C. Phan is the Ignacio Ellacuría Chair of Catholic Social Thought at Georgetown University. His forthcoming book is *A Christian Theology of Migration* (Oxford University Press).

'WE HAVE STUDENTS THAT ARE THAT GOOD.'

An inspiring art teacher at Creighton Prep leads a student renaissance



Courtesy of Creighton Preparatory School

Jeremy Caniglia, an art teacher at Creighton Preparatory School, instructs Michael Bope on a painting of Pedro Arrupe, S.J.

When entering the Skinner Chapel at Creighton Preparatory School in Omaha, Neb., one could be forgiven for mistaking the bright, modern space for a gallery in a world-class art museum. The artwork adorning the pristine white walls evinces a masterful use of light and shadow, much of it in the style of the master painter Caravaggio, the Italian Baroque artist renowned for his intensely realistic and dramatic religious scenes.

What makes this collection remarkable, though, is that while each piece showcases prodigious painting prowess, none were created by a professional artist. Instead, each one has emerged from the prayerful imagination and painstakingly measured brushstrokes of the high school's own students.

"We have students here that are that good, that could paint them!" Jeremy Caniglia said when the school's president, Thomas W. Neitzke, S.J., asked for his advice on buying a set of Stations of the Cross for the school's newly renovated chapel in 2016.

With the green light from the president, Mr. Caniglia turned to Irving Delgado-Arellanes, a senior student, to take on the creative challenge. "He laid out all 14 stations,"

Mr. Caniglia told *America* in an interview at the school's atelier this spring. Mr. Delgado-Arellanes excelled, earning second place at the national Scholastic Art & Writing Awards.

"It was the first religious piece we ever had to go to the nationals," Mr. Caniglia said, pointing out that it was unusual for religious art to get such acclaim in a secular competition. Emboldened by the success of this student's first commission, Mr. Caniglia set out to deliver on even bolder plans.

"There was an original plan in the 1950s to have each of those side altars with the Jesuit saints. Some were about mission, some were about education," Mr. Caniglia said, recalling a later conversation with Father Nietzsche at the school. "So we were going over that and I said, 'We could paint these—the students could, if they work in groups of six,'" he added, a gentle smile spreading across his face. "So we started that program up and it was just really inspiring."

Before he could continue, Mr. Caniglia had something deeper he needed to share. Proud of his Sicilian roots, he wanted to point out his ancestral connection to the bedrock of Jesuit education in Messina, Sicily, where 10 members of the Society of Jesus opened the first Jesuit school in 1548. "I have this love and care, and understanding of a lot of the traditions," Mr. Caniglia said. "One of them that I fell in love with was the composition of place from Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises."

It appears this is the force behind this art teacher's success in the classroom. "It's hard because you get these young men in here and some are really spiritual, religious, [but] some never tackled, never understood any of that," he explained. "I had one student who was not religious at all. He did the first [painting of] Ignatius for us."

Mr. Caniglia replayed the kind of conversation he has when introducing this facet of Ignatian prayer and contemplation as a technique his students can employ when conceiving new artwork in the classroom. "I tried to explain it like this to them: 'You see method actors that you guys love. You guys love [them] on screen because they become the part.'"

Then he encourages students to imagine themselves as the characters in Bible stories—even becoming Jesus—as Ignatius did, to draw spiritual insights and creative inspiration for their paintings. "If you're reading the Gospels and you could picture yourself for a minute as Mary watching her son die, trying to be the mother, put on a strong face

for your son who's going on this spiritual path of sorrow," he said. "And then you're looking at the son looking at the mother; he looks at his mom and he's got to put on his best face."

"When we talk about the stories, they become more real. Students start thinking, 'The saints are really cool,'" he said. "I think they see that, and they're more influenced, and it kind of pulls them in."

Creighton Prep's 34th president, Matthew C. Spotts, S.J., agrees. "The arts are crucial to Jesuit education," he said when asked to comment on the school's artistic heritage. "Our arts programs are a home for students at Creighton Prep, but they also inspire the expansion of heart and imagination—elements that are indispensable to Ignatian practice."

Art and Perseverance

Nic Thurman's first year at Creighton Prep took a surprising turn when a friend's invitation to the school's art studio sparked a passion for art and painting. "The world has no idea the amount of perseverance it takes to succeed in art," Mr. Caniglia told Omaha Magazine earlier this year. "But I saw that in Nic before he was even in my class."

A year later, Mr. Caniglia encouraged Nic, now his student, to paint a pivotal scene from St. Ignatius Loyola's early life, the moment when he decided to renounce his

military aspirations and become "a soldier for Christ."

"I don't understand this Ignatius. Why do you want me to do this painting?" Mr. Caniglia recalled Nic asking. His response: "Nic, you have so much in common with this guy; he got hit by a cannonball."

The teacher explained the connection: "You were on the football field your sophomore year," he remembers telling his state-record-holding, powerlifting student. "You got hit at a Millard North game."

The accident crushed his student's knee, according to Mr. Caniglia. "He can't play football ever again," he said. "And he can barely powerlift."

"Ignatius had to rethink his whole life," Mr. Caniglia said. "And Nic did the same thing. He's like: 'I want to go into the arts.'" Telling the story with excitement, Mr. Caniglia clenched the table he was standing behind. "Over Christmas break, he came up with that scene [of St. Ignatius], which from a 16- to 17-year-old student, I was like, 'This is amazing!'"

Mr. Caniglia identified deeply with his student's story. An alumnus of Creighton Prep himself, he recalls his parents wanting him to play the saxophone in the school band, but he was "terrible" at it. Fortunately, his band teacher agreed and suggested he take an art course.

"Could you draw this? Could you do this?" Bob Wil-lits, the art teacher, asked him. "And I had a knack for it,"

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Courtesy of Creighton Preparatory School

Irving Delgado-Arellanes shows the Stations of the Cross that he painted for the chapel at Creighton Prep.

Mr. Caniglia recalled. “I loved seeing something invisible become visible in front of me. And from that day, it’s never changed. I get so excited when I do a piece.”

Mr. Caniglia’s passion and talent for art only grew stronger after high school. He pursued his dream of being an artist through scholarships, first at Iowa State University and then at the prestigious Maryland Institute College of Art, where he earned a master’s degree in fine arts. This led to artistic residencies in New York and later in Norway, where he studied under the renowned Norwegian master painter Odd Nerdrum. “He’s like one of the last old masters. He paints like Caravaggio,” Mr. Caniglia said. “He only takes three students a year from around the world.”

Today, Jeremy Caniglia’s artwork is exhibited internationally, showcasing his mastery of religious and classical themes. He is also a sought-after illustrator for the book covers and pages of many best-selling fiction authors, including Stephen King, Max Brooks and Charles Dickens. His diverse portfolio also spans art for movies, magazines, comics and concept art for Showtime’s “Masters of Horror” series.

Aside from his artistic accomplishments, Mr. Caniglia is a family man and outdoor enthusiast. He has a wife, Jacqui, and two children, Vivian and the aptly named Caravaggio. Mr. Caniglia explores the mountains—hiking, bouldering or biking—and tends to his native bees and garden. After teaching at Creighton University, he joined Creighton Prep, earned a master’s in secondary education, and was recognized as one of eight secondary educators of the year in the Archdiocese of Omaha in 2022.

In 2017, Mr. Thurman traced the contours of his teacher’s creative path when he was chosen as Odd Nerdrum’s youngest-ever apprentice. Fresh out of high school and just 18 years old, he embarked on a three-year residency at the

Nerdrum School in Sweden, where he mastered his technique and carried forward the artistic legacy born and nurtured in him at Creighton Prep.

Mr. Thurman is but one of Mr. Caniglia’s student success stories in the fine arts world. Another student, Gannon McMullen, who worked on the painting of St. Francis Xavier in the school chapel, is presently studying at the Grand Central Atelier in Queens, N.Y.—which is, Mr. Caniglia said, “the top school in the United States for Renaissance-style painting.”

Hunter Parry, who painted the portrait of St. Aloysius Gonzaga that also hangs in the Skinner Chapel, went on to study at the Florence Academy of Art. “They only take 24 students around the world,” Mr. Caniglia said.

After his first year in Florence, Mr. Parry visited Mr. Caniglia at Creighton Prep. “I asked how he was doing,” the teacher recalled, “and he replied, ‘I find myself going into the churches and I sit, and I’m thankful for everything we did at Prep.’” Mr. Caniglia paused. “That was huge for me,” he said, fighting back tears.

The teacher continued to recount the conversation, which had unfolded in the student chapel as they stood before the painting of St. Aloysius Gonzaga that Mr. Parry had worked on. “I didn’t understand it at the time. I didn’t know what we were doing,” said Mr. Caniglia, recalling Mr. Parry’s words to him. “Now I get it; when I sit and look at those paintings and what they mean, and what they mean to someone who’s devoted, or has a prayer life, I have that now. I sit there and I find the same solace, reflection.”

Encounters like these give meaning to this teacher’s life. “I find myself giving as much time as I can because I feel like that’s why I’m here. That’s my purpose: to just inspire,” Mr. Caniglia said. “I feel like they’re a part of me, in different ways, and they’re going to do amazing things. I just want to pay it forward, with *cura personalis*, and try to reach them and know there’s great things in this world. It’s not all gloom and doom; there’s so much opportunity for them.”

Ricardo da Silva, S.J., is an associate editor at *America* and the host of the podcast “Preach.” View additional images of student artwork mentioned in this article at americamagazine.org/creighton-prep.



LIVING ON SCAN TIME

What surviving cancer—for now—
taught me about life

By Barbara Mahany

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Ever since the murky hour when, through an ethereal fog, I made out the silhouette of my surgeon beside the bed where I lay tethered to tubes, ever since I heard him utter the words, “Turns out it was cancer; I was really surprised,” and I pressed my hand to where half my lung used to be, I have been living in Scan Time.

Scan Time is time reordered, narrowed, heightened. Scan Time is time abbreviated, shrunken to digestible, perceptible segments. It comes in the immediate wake of finding out you have cancer—in my case, lung cancer. Now that my tumor and a good chunk of lung have been removed, watchkeeping—scans every three to six months, for at least five years—is my first line of defense against its return.

Appointments are made a half year out; the date on the calendar becomes your benchmark, the point as far in the distance as you will let yourself see. The screens in the waiting rooms at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center flash with a digital message: *Scanxiety? We understand that waiting for scans can be hard. Call our social work team now.* Everyone grasps that whatever the future is, it hinges on

what they find when the all-seeing machine—a Goliathan O-ring that swallows you whole—peers deep inside your body.

You are told not to move once you climb onto the hard plastic bed that makes me think *sarcophagus*, especially as it glides eerily into the shadowed encasement. And then comes this contender for the world’s most redundant instruction: “Hold your breath,” the disembodied words piped in from what seems an otherworldly station.

In lieu of breathing, you pray mightily that no new ghostly suspicions emerge. And then you wait. And wait.

Should the all-clear be granted, you are etch-a-sketched back to a clean slate.

Scan Time: the lease on your life, meted out in six-month installments.

Turns out, it’s something of a blessing, one that sharpens the focus on the miracle of each moment, peels away the anesthetization to time that, for most of us, is default mode. We live, most of us, thinking ours is a timeline that extends into the far-off far off. And that dulls the noticing



WE LIVE, MOST OF US, THINKING OURS IS A TIMELINE THAT EXTENDS INTO THE FAR-OFF FAR OFF.

of each never-again day.

But when you're told you've got cancer, when you feel the iron weight of that sentence fall with a *thunk* on your every breath, the bracketed finiteness of time—of life itself—now doled out in measures of half a year per dose, it amplifies everything. Each pulsebeat of living is magnified, glorified. It's time distilled to its most sacred concentration.

And it draws out a knowing that's deep and profound, one that's not too dissimilar to an ancient spiritual practice that understands the holiness in contemplating our death. Or, in my case, contemplating the reduction of time, the days I count on my half-year watch. At first glance, that might sound morbid. But it's emphatically the opposite.

Memento mori is the age-old practice of remembering that you will die. It's an ancient philosophical thread, a spiritual practice woven across time and traditions (be they moral or religious traditions) from early Stoicism to medieval Christianity, from ancient Judaism to the central teachings of Buddhism.

St. Benedict of Nursia, in his sixth-century book of precepts known simply as the *Rule*, exhorted his monks to “keep death daily” before their eyes. It's an awareness that winds its way through most world religions, although barely so in the West, where we do all we can to push away any whiff of dying or death.

To understand that our days are not infinite, not a bottomless pour, spilling one after another so dizzyingly that we are numb to each dawn's awakening, is to tight-squeeze our focus on how precious this time of ours is. Pope Francis, in his apostolic exhortation “*Laudate Deum*,” posed three critical questions: “What is the meaning of my life? What is the meaning of my time on this earth? And what is the ultimate meaning of all my work and effort?”

Those questions take on an inescapable edge when held up in six-month increments. We're a simpler people than we sometimes pretend. We're keener at grasping hard truths when they're pressed up against us. Cancer presses hard truths. Scan Time sharpens focus, propels us deep into seizing the day. Seizing each blessed day.

Once upon a time, I was a nurse who took care of kids with all sorts of cancers. Back in the days before scanners were part of every oncologist's medical tool kit, I remember more than anything how those kids somehow eclipsed the cancer in their lives. They shoved it out of the viewfinder, didn't let it intrude on however many days were counted in their too-short lives. Theirs was an innate genius—not a day dithered away—that echoes across the decades.

I remember how kids with an amputated leg and a hospital-issued pair of crutches clocked how swiftly they could race down the hall, without crashing into medicine carts—or their nurses. Or how, as soon as the retching from

chemo ended, they'd order up midnight pizzas and hunker down in the supply closet for a tête-à-tête with their IV poles and their bald co-conspirators. Or how, one Halloween, one of my favorites, a 12-year-old with a tumor lodged in her spine that left her paralyzed from the waist down, didn't let that stop her from slopping papier-mâché all over her bedsheets, as she crafted me a green, tempera-painted pumpkin head and crowned me her Irish Pumpkin Queen.

Those children made time count. And they didn't need scans to prompt it. All these years later, I draw on their wisdom, though I lean on the scanner—a machine that might see what is inside me but not what lies down the road.

Scan Time, I've realized, propels me to live sacramentally, to hold time to the light, to behold its shimmering brilliance, the facets of my life I consider most indispensably sacred. And to enfold myself in each anointed hour.

I might be mesmerized by a butterfly. Might sit down to pen that long-overdue confession. Might devote my perishable days to those few souls I cannot bear to leave behind, revel in the litany of whimsies we've long promised we'd get to, indulge with abandon. Or maybe I'll travel to pockets of the world where my heart and my hands—and my long-expired nursing license—might be put to good use.

Scan Time is palliative, too; it offers something of a balm. Where the arithmetic of five-year-survival rates sets me to trembling as I weigh cold, hard probabilities, I'm washed in some iteration of calm when I set my sights on half a year at a time. Like a mountain climber trekking past mile marker after mile marker, I keep my eyes on the immediate path and don't try to peek around circuitous, unseeable bends.

Yet underpinning each round is the knowing this might be the last, the one with expiration. One of these rounds, you suppose, the call won't be so freeing. And time then will shift again. Day after day the distilling comes, until each last minute holds all that you love, all that desperately matters.

Barbara Mahany, once a pediatric oncology nurse, was a longtime staff writer at the *Chicago Tribune*. She is the author of five books, most recently *The Book of Nature: The Astonishing Beauty of God's First Sacred Text* (Broadleaf Books).



ONE MAN'S PRAYER

How St. Ignatius' Examen helped me understand my obsessive-compulsive disorder

By Joshua Gray

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When things were at their worst, it took me an hour and a half to leave my attic apartment. Touching was a compulsion: Touch every electrical outlet in the place. Make sure none were hot. Check the stove. That meant touching the burners, the broil element, the bake element and all the knobs. Check the breaker box, the locks. Choke back the humiliation and panic and do it all again, and again and again. At its worst, my obsessive-compulsive disorder held me in my apartment until the last possible minute. When I finally walked out the door, it wasn't because I felt good about leaving; I simply knew that if I didn't, I would lose my graduate assistantship.

To finally make it to the street was a liberating feeling. I could turn my attention to my postgraduate studies and the day ahead. I could breathe in the crisp Illinois air. Then one day, halfway on my walk to the university, a thought stopped me in my tracks: the possibility that the water heater's pilot light was leaking gas. I sat down and wept.

Of course, I knew somewhere deep inside that everything was fine in the apartment, that if any disaster were to occur, it wouldn't be due to my lack of diligence. Yet I also knew that I would walk back home, wriggle into the crawl

space and make sure the pilot light was lit. Why? Because otherwise my worry would become a white-hot, raging ember burning into the very core of my being. Trying to cool that ember was such a Sisyphean effort that it could grind a person down.

No. That statement is too pretty. O.C.D. can drive someone to think about suicide.

'Not Good at Letting Things Go'

According to the American Psychiatric Association, obsessive-compulsive disorder is officially defined as "a disorder in which people have recurring, unwanted thoughts, ideas or sensations (obsessions). To get rid of the thoughts, they feel driven to do something repetitively (compulsions). The repetitive behaviors...can significantly interfere with a person's daily activities and social interactions."

What O.C.D. feels like, however, is to be plagued by carrion birds. Sometimes floating above, drifting, gyring, alighting, pecking. Sometimes swarming in a ravenous horde.

I've experienced obsessions and compulsions since childhood. "Not good at letting things go" is how my parents described it. When I was growing up in the Deep South



THOSE THOUGHTS CREPT IN LIKE A NOXIOUS GAS.

of the 1980s and '90s, mental health was never discussed. I blamed myself for being different. Only later did I realize that anger, anxiety, depression and trauma were our family heirlooms.

A childhood obsession of mine was fear of going to hell, of being taken by the devil. The way I saw it, the devil could slip in easily, swiftly, undetectably—in a sip of water, through the soles of your feet when walking barefoot, by your answering yes to a benign question. My compulsion to counteract this was nonverbal chanting. To protect against possession, for example, before and after every drink I'd silently chant, "Bless this swallow and all the ones that follow." I still think this on rare occasions, and yes, it does soothe in its own strange way. What can I say? The compulsions might be one's torturers, but, after a while, they also seem familiar companions.

As an adult, my obsession with hell was replaced with fear of contracting a sexually transmitted disease, of death, of disaster and of humiliation. Something goes terribly wrong and I'm to blame, with no way to fix it. As the O.C.D. grew worse, I feared people discovering that I was losing my mind. So I stopped making friends.

To avoid slipping completely into what felt like insanity, I sought professional help from a campus psychologist, an underpaid saint of a man. With my official diagnosis came a certain relief in knowing that I wasn't insane but rather was suffering from an intense psychological disorder. Just being able to name my experience helped to bring my typical 90-minute morning ritual down to a tight 75. And that felt like a holiday. Until it didn't.

I rarely slept. Exhaustion was as constant as a cellmate, as heavy as a tumor. At night, I found relaxation in driving to the lake at the local state park. But in the early morning darkness, when the whole world was reduced to what was lit by a pair of headlights, I'd think of how a simple tug on the steering wheel would plunge the vehicle inescapably into the water, or into the trunk of a particularly large oak.

Unbuckle yourself. Make it easier. Write a note? Or let your mother think it was just a terrible accident? Accident would be better. The tree is a good choice. It gives her a pilgrimage site, a place to mourn. And she likes plants. She might find solace in weeding among the roots. She could keep a jar of its acorns on the mantel back home in Mississippi.

Those thoughts crept in like a noxious gas. Once-a-week therapy was nice, but I needed something more. My life depended upon it.

Some Sainly Help

I've always found comfort in the library stacks and the musty, lived-in smell of old books. During my sleepless

nights, I reread Aurelius, Nietzsche and Jung, but they had already given me what wisdom they could. Next came Brené Brown and Eckhart Tolle. I distrusted their suggestions of mindfulness, since I felt that my compulsions were mindfulness at its most grotesque.

Around that time, a classmate asked me what I was reading. She was a rich Jersey girl, jockish and thin and Catholic. I sheepishly admitted to self-help books about mindfulness. My aunt reads that stuff, she said, not really listening. I nodded, embarrassed, prepared to palaver about sports; her Yankees were winning.

Then she said: They taught us the examen in school.

I replied: Exam? Like a test?

She chortled. I looked it up.

This introduced me to St. Ignatius Loyola. Back to the library for a copy of the *Spiritual Exercises*. Google supplemented my research. Yet the thought of prayer frightened me. I did not want it to be a return to the chanting of my childhood.

But this prayer, as I understood it, meant one was to have a conversation with God, starting with one's waking and working through the day, giving thanks for everything that happened, no matter how large, no matter how small. And then noticing where God was present and offering gratitude. It was worth a shot.

Thus, late one night, I sat in my apartment and thought about my day. I hadn't slept, so there was no waking, but I'd had a good cup of coffee. *Thank you.* I'd enjoyed an evening walk under Illinois hardwoods dripping with autumn rain. *Thank you.* During that walk, I'd seen an owl flitter through the penumbra of a streetlight. *Thank you.* At some point, I fell asleep, if only for a short while.

A part of me worried that the examen would become a compulsion, too. Still, I started practicing the examen in line for coffee, along the aisles of the grocery store, walking to work, pacing in my attic and, eventually, during my night drives. Slowly I began to understand the blessing of gratefulness, of appreciating what I saw and felt. On a night walk, I saw a gaze of raccoons 30 strong. *Thank you.* I saw a skunk with three kits who lifted their tails to defend their mother from human harm. *Thank you.* I found a white oak that had the skeletons of small creatures at its roots, a massive hawk nest high in its canopy. *Thank you.* On these occasions, there was the sense of not being alone, of



ONCE-A-WEEK THERAPY WAS NICE, BUT I NEEDED SOMETHING MORE.

a presence nearby. There was a Catholic church across the street, which was, on occasion, riotously full of Chicagoans. I attended my first Mass there. It was in Spanish. I said *thank you*.

This was a lovely repose from the obsessive-compulsive lifestyle, but that was during the evening. Then I saw a quotation from 1 Thessalonians on an Ignatian website: “Give thanks in all circumstances.” And I knew that I couldn’t avoid the morning terror any longer.

A New Routine

In my morning routine, I returned again and again to the gas stove. I knew a family who’d died in their sleep from a gas leak. My therapist and I discussed this event as the root of my obsession. But that didn’t make the compulsions to touch any less real or less powerful.

I touched the burners. Cool to the touch. *Thank you*. I moved onto the next compulsion. Forty-five minutes later, I was out the door. A minor miracle. Yet I had to sit on the stairwell, breathe deep, count the numbers, still the heart. I said *thank you*. By the end of the week, I could

leave in 20 minutes.

My fear that the examen would become a compulsion never materialized. The examen is a choice. This is an incredibly important distinction. A compulsion is an action that can override common sense, desire and logic. The examen carved a space between me and the compulsion, just enough to breathe, to think and to make a deliberate choice.

I often describe my routine of touching as if I were a drowning man being swept downstream by an overpowering current, reaching out for rocks that are too slick. The examen was the rock that I was finally able to grab hold of. St. Ignatius saved me from going under, being swept away in the current. It prevented a cross under a great oak in Illinois. For that I say *thank you*.

Editor’s note: If you are having thoughts of suicide, call or text 988 to reach the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.

Joshua Gray lives along the Texas-Mexico border with his wife and son, where he teaches at the University of Texas, Rio Grande Valley. His stories have been awarded the Barry Hannah Prize in Fiction as well as the William Van Dyke Short Story Prize.



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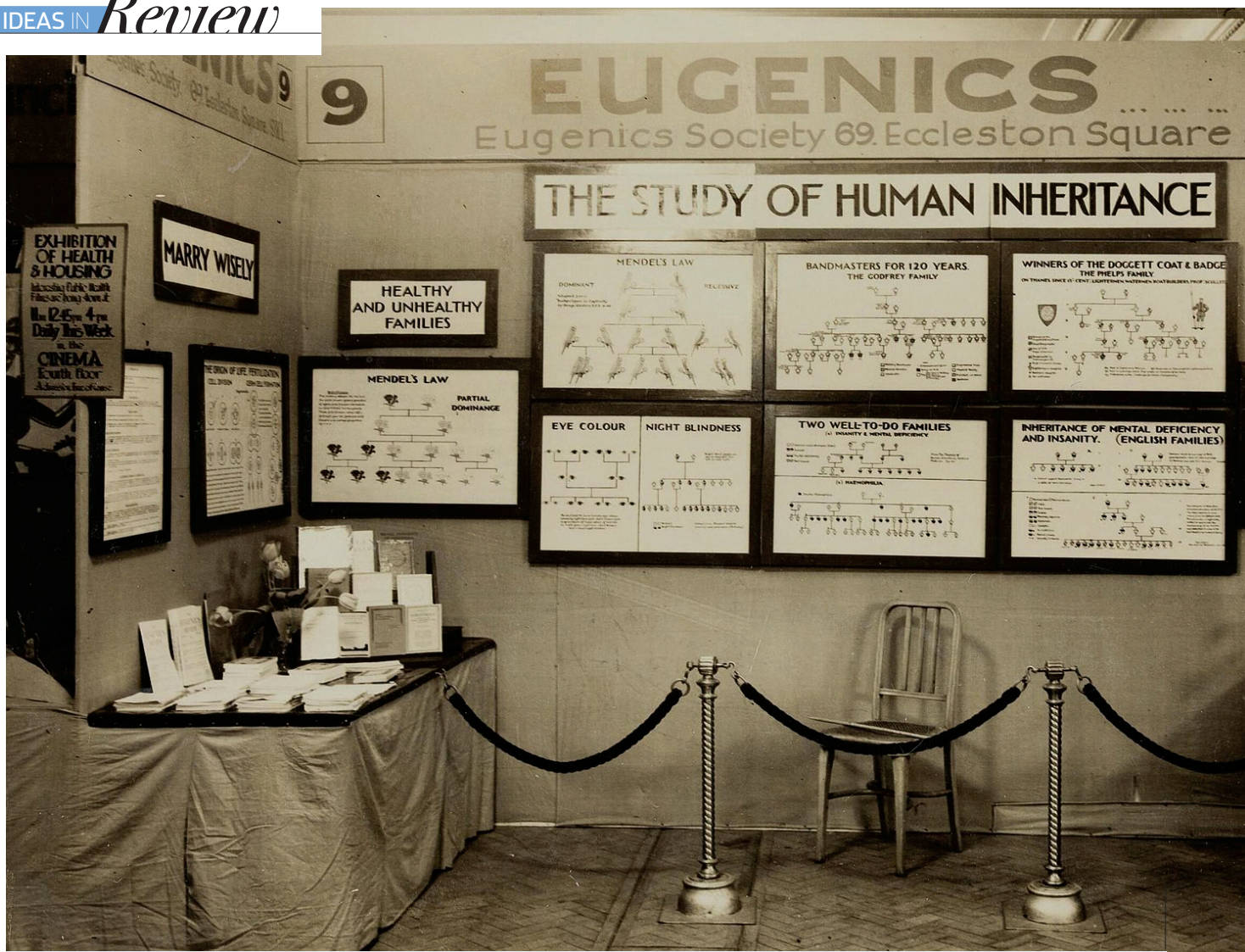
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Eugenics: Everywhere and Nowhere

By John P. Slattery

Eugenics was everywhere a century ago. Dozens of countries and a similar number of U.S. states passed eugenics laws allowing forced sterilizations. In 1924, Virginia passed a sweeping eugenics law on the same day that its Racial Integrity Act became law, banning interracial marriage of any kind. This eugenics law became famous as it worked its way through the court system, reaching the Supreme Court in 1927 in *Buck v. Bell*. There, in a landmark ruling that would stand until the '60s, Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr. would pen the terrible closing lines of the majority opinion: "Three generations of imbeciles are enough."

After this judgment, the defendant, Carrie Buck, was forcibly sterilized in 1927, the first of thousands of women sterilized in Virginia alone. The Virginia law would become a model for the eugenic system in Nazi Germany, where

hundreds of thousands would be sterilized before the death camps became common practice. Forced sterilizations in the United States continued until at least 1973, long after the concentration camps were destroyed. Today, 31 U.S. states have laws allowing forced sterilization for disabled individuals and incarcerated individuals. The most recent laws were passed in 2019.

Sometimes a century seems like a long time. Sometimes it does not.

A Cultural Touchstone

Eugenics has become a cultural touchstone through these evils, standing among an infamous group of related ideas that have proved themselves terrible for humanity. But eugenics held rather an opposite meaning for quite some



A 1930s exhibit by the Eugenics Society. Two of the signs read "Healthy and Unhealthy Families" and "Heredity as the Basis of Efficiency."

time, especially among the highest echelons of polite society. From its introduction in the 1880s until its cultural demise in the 1950s, eugenics represented (sometimes simultaneously) the noblest intentions of scientists, the worst intentions of racists and the mediocre intentions of politicians.

At different times and for different people, eugenics had a range of meanings, including forced sterilization and genocide but also marrying well, practicing healthy eating habits and raising intelligent children to fulfill God's vision for humanity. Eugenics was a global movement of bio-politics; a scientific movement centered on heredity, statistics and a particular definition of human progress; a political movement for racial and intellectual "purity"; and a popular movement that fed on the worst biases of humanity.

Over the last century, the meaning of the word *eugenics* has decidedly shifted. This is due in part to civil rights movements in the United States and international declarations of human equality, scientific developments like in-vitro fertilization and gene editing, and modern statistical methods of genetical analysis. Rather than serve as a label for a political and scientific vision of achieving a "perfect" human species, eugenics has become a negative term associated only with evil scientists and Nazi medical experiments. Like Nazis, it is something in the past; as long as people are given a personal choice in their fertility and genetics, modern society can perhaps be free of this terrible legacy.

At least this is the argument in Adam Rutherford's popular book *Control: The Dark History and Troubling Present of Eugenics* (2022), in which the author, a geneticist, argues that eugenics was about control, and that despite all the possibilities of genetic manipulation, the

modern insistence on personal and parental choice frees us from allegations of that troubling term. It is a convincing book, condemning the many biases of the eugenics era on the way to condemning the existence of racial and other eugenic-related biases that persist in modern science today. As he tries to disambiguate the scientific progress of genetics from the bad intentions of eugenic actors in the past and present, Rutherford eventually asks a pivotal question: Given all we know today, is the ideal of eugenics—that genetically perfect human—even possible?

Rutherford answers that the perfect human is impossible both now and, most likely, far, far into the future. This is unquestionably good news, but his question left me with a bad aftertaste. Why did he ask this question at all? What purpose did it serve?

Don't Ask

Of the many things that the history of eugenics should teach modern society, two stand out in this discussion. First, not all questions are good questions. Second, statistics can be warped to tell you pretty much anything you want.

"Are men more intelligent than women?" is not a question children should be asking, much less professional scientists. Given the biased and culturally determined nature of intelligence, and all the violence attached to this question over millennia, to do research on this question is *dangerous and deeply unethical*. But despite their danger, questions of intelligence seem tame compared with an even more reprehensible set of questions, like "Are [insert human subgroup] really human?" or "Should [insert human subgroup] be allowed to exist in the world?" These questions reek of violence, and carry with them a legacy of murder. Some questions have earned their place in the landfills of science and society. Questions that toy with genocide, like those that dance around racial or gender inequality, should not be tolerated.

Despite the best of intentions, Rutherford's question belongs in a similar category. It is neither helpful nor ethical to ask if eugenics could actually work. Nor does it matter that Rutherford asks this question only to dismantle the idea. It doesn't matter that modern genetics can no more bring about human perfection than it could 100 years ago, given issues of side effects, experimentation problems and the impossible challenge of determining intelligence.

If the leading voices in the field continue to ask these questions, then no matter the answer, everyone will continue



We live in a world formed deeply by eugenics practices and policies and questions.

to think it is acceptable to wonder if a worldwide eugenic program could really be successful. And if people continue to wonder, they will continue to follow those lines of thought to terrible, terrible places.

What Is *Not* Eugenics?

The modern discussion of the lingering effects of the eugenics movement suffers because of the volatile nature of the word *eugenics* itself. Like saying someone is a racist or a Nazi, an accusation of eugenics is typically one that ends conversations, and if it doesn't, it can be easily batted off by pointing out the many differences between modern genetic experimentation and the historical eugenics movement.

Let me be clear: There are plenty of racist and ableist people, research programs and government programs, just as there are plenty of intolerable questions currently labeled as acceptable roads of inquiry. But these people and programs do not necessarily comprise a modern equivalent of the 19th-century eugenics movement.

Abortion advocates and effective altruists (who aim to use statistical methods to determine the most effective charity work) are not eugenicists, and neither are I.V.F. users or gene-editing companies. Even government-controlled heredity programs like those in China or forced sterilization laws in the United States are only distant legacies of the eugenics movement at its height. All of these ideas are children of eugenics, but none of them *are* eugenics. Still, you don't need to be a historian of eugenics to see the sterilization of individuals against their will as a core violation of bodily autonomy, no matter the disability or incarceration of that person.

As for the popular but questionable philosophy known as effective altruism, it includes a new, and very influential, branch known as "longtermism." Followers of longtermism want to see a thriving future of a limitless human species in 100,000 or 100 billion years. In order to achieve such thriving, they value investments in space travel, multi-planet colonization, human-longevity science and—at times—population control through public campaigns as well as easy access to birth control and abortion. These goals sometimes supersede more straightforward campaigns

such as vaccination efforts, disease mitigation and fighting global hunger, skipping the present for the future.

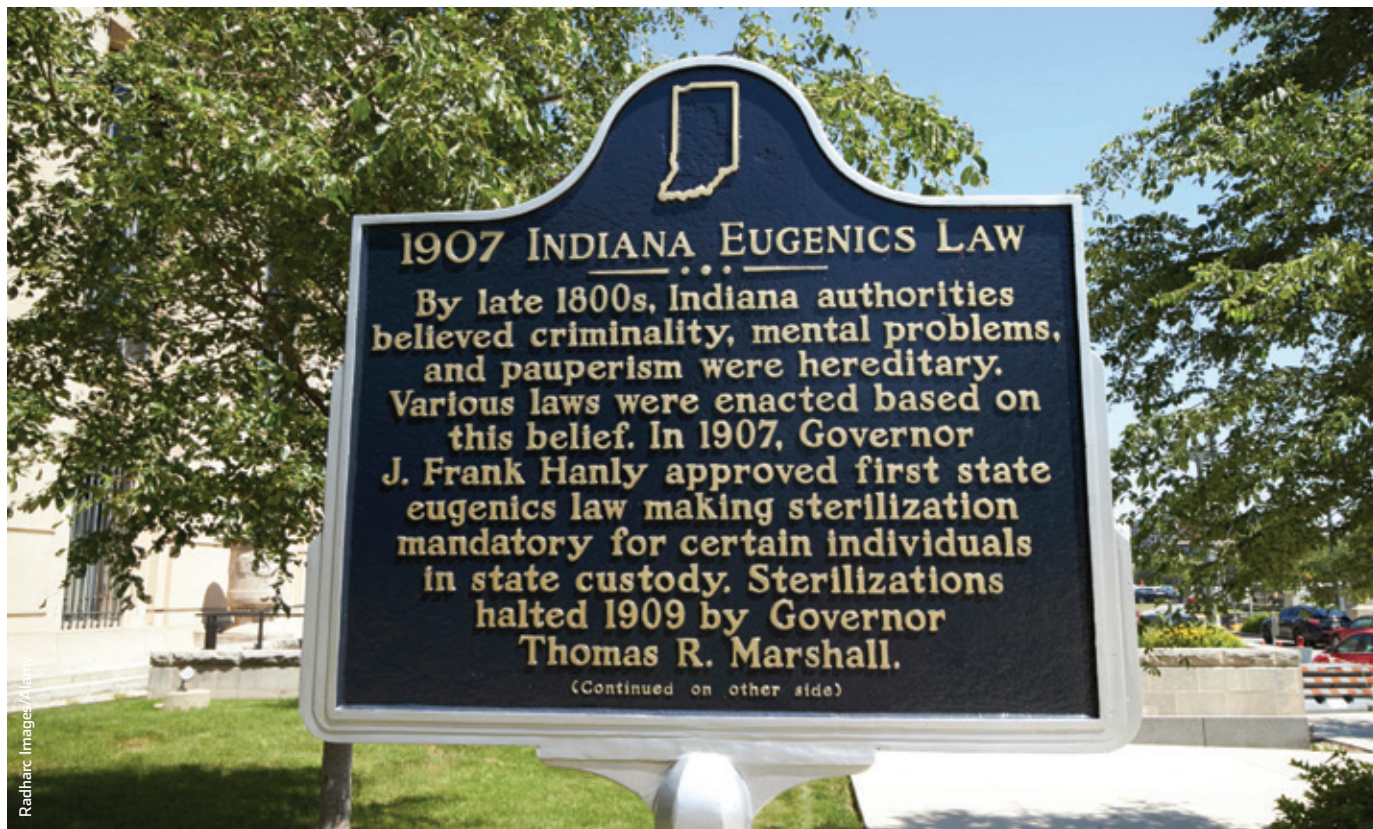
These ideas have ties to eugenics, especially in the genetics of human longevity and in population control, but the ethical problems of longtermists go well beyond their connection to eugenics. Longtermists hold morally problematic notions of capitalistic savior complexes, embrace a priority of Western ideals, and often espouse racist undertones of controlling non-white populations. Longtermists also hold a devotion to unproven statistical methods similar to those of the originators of eugenics—by assuming, for example, that statistics can tell you which billion-dollar investments will save humanity in 10,000 years. You don't need to be opposed to eugenics to see the oppressive problems of such arguments; you just need to value human equality.

Modern abortion advocates are also not eugenicists, and modern abortion practices are not eugenics. It is true that early abortion practices, including those initiated through Planned Parenthood, were directly in support of political eugenic enforcement. Yet this fact has since been acknowledged even by Planned Parenthood itself, which has worked to distance itself from its founder, the noted eugenicist Margaret Sanger.

Furthermore, the two aspects of abortion typically labeled as eugenic are much better understood through more straightforward moral arguments. First, the abortion of unborn children with genetic malformations, such as Down syndrome, is *not* eugenics, as it is neither forced nor part of an overall cultural vision of a biologically perfect society. Instead, such abortions are best understood as deliberate blindness to the humanity of the unborn child with Down syndrome, a blindness that is caused by misperceptions of happiness levels of people with disabilities, the presence of widespread ableism in society, and the lack of a strong social safety net for children and adults with mental and physical disabilities. Ableism clearly fueled eugenics, but ableism existed long before the eugenics movement, and it will persist long after.

Second, in a similar vein, people selecting embryos for gender and specific genetic characteristics, while ableist and dangerous and rising in popularity, is not eugenics. It is highly unlikely that humanity will ever narrow down the genetic conditions to produce specific heights or eye color, not to mention vastly more complex things like intelligence, artistic ability or beauty—a point that Rutherford argues. Any attempt to convince individuals and parents of the opposite is a lie, veiled by corporations as potentially beneficial for health to increase market share based upon fear of sickness and death.

This is the dark side of 23andMe and similar corporations



A marker in Indianapolis describes the history of a 1907 Indiana eugenics law.

whose proven ability to connect long-lost family members and give people a rough sense of genetic heritage has enabled them to become a popular, trusted medium for genetic information, shielding the core of their true identity: a corporate giant that traffics in human biological data, much as Meta traffics in human social data. This deception connects directly back to the early days of eugenics, when Francis Galton and others used poor statistical correlations to convince people that eugenics was a viable scientific project. But the similarity with eugenics withers away quickly.

Remember the Past

Modern society would look very different were it not for the impact of eugenics, and the same could be said about racism, slavery, misogyny, warfare and colonialism. And like these other evils, traces of eugenics can be found everywhere. We live in a world formed deeply by eugenics practices and policies and questions, a world where biological politics are commonplace and biological power is perhaps the greatest power of all.

Our shared history of eugenics lingers throughout society: broken, disassembled and regurgitated as similar but different unethical movements and norms, inside and

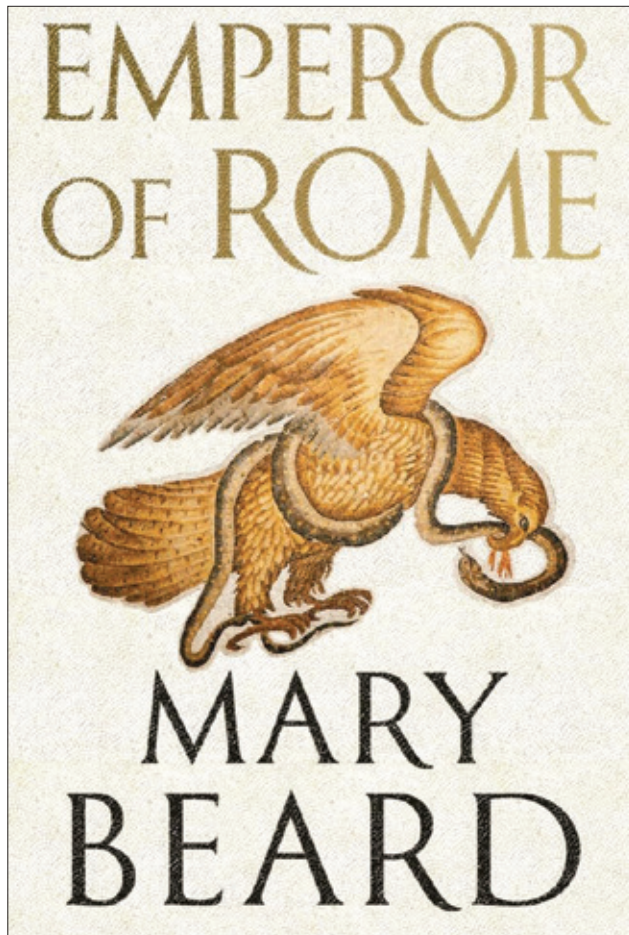
outside of science. We would do well to remember the past, to see its lingering effects and to hold dear the shreds of humanity that bring us together, instead of falling victim to any number of visions of future perfection, be they gender-based, racial, biological or technological. These visions will engender countless acts of pain and destruction on their supposed path to greatness, as have all visions of physical perfection before them.

And though I would like to end with this clarion call to oppose eugenics, I fear the rot is more systemic than interpersonal, better served with long-term dedication to those with disabilities and those cast aside and underfunded in foster care, in hospitals, in group homes, in prisons. We must shift not only our entire selves, but our workplaces, our governments and our communities to unravel the systems that continue to devour the vulnerable, and to build systems that protect and serve them.

Much can change in a century, but much can also stay the same.

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ROMAN IMPERIAL POWER



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As much historiography as it is history, Mary Beard's *Emperor of Rome* is monumental: intricately detailed, awe-inspiring in scope, and a testament to her wide-ranging and engaging scholarship. An account of “what it meant to be a Roman emperor,” the book is also a sustained exploration of tradition embodied by an individual ruler. The work presents the reader with information ripe for further exploration and interpretation—a monument not only to Rome’s institution of imperial rule but to the swirl of stories that create its “emperors of the imagination.”

The interchange between the minutiae of lived experience during Roman antiquity—the ground-level view of daily routines, paperwork, clothes—and the panoptic view is perhaps the most exciting part of Beard’s work. Beyond her masterly unpacking of what it meant to be the Roman emperor, her reading of all sorts of material prompts her reader to look at the quotidian details of her or his own life with new eyes, as evidence of the structures and dynamics that permeate society at any given time and place. Beard

frequently and conversationally draws comparisons between ancient and modern—Imelda Marcos shows up on the second page—that reveal not just the ubiquity of sensationalized stories about the rich and famous, but also that those stories can tell us as much about the audience that composes and consumes them as about the subjects themselves.

In this way, Beard gives us a sense not just of the realities of imperial life, but also of the stakes of asking such questions and of the historiographical process itself. Her interest lies in the gap between practicalities and perception, the baked-in Roman fears that imperial rule “was a strange and unsettling dystopia built on deception and fakery.” Beard paints a picture of a world in which everyone—emperors included—was trying to construct their idea of what an emperor should be in a nation that could not and would not accept kingship at face value.

This element of projection is the through-line of a book that, for all its richness of sources, details and insights, does not lead to a cohesive conclusion. As Beard explains and her book demonstrates: Despite having so very much to work with, we are in the end left with a tangle of threads to follow rather than a finished tapestry. This is not to diminish the author’s great achievement of sorting through the threads and the wide range of materials from which they are spun.

As any teacher of Roman history knows, one of the challenges of explaining Roman autocracy is the nature of the republic that preceded it. In the first chapter, Beard explains how a “*sort-of* democracy” became a monarchy in all but name. This political evolution was a focus of Beard’s preceding book, *SPQR*. “Empire” proper was in some ways the natural culmination of centuries of aristocratic striving to be top dog in tandem with the practical exigencies of running a vast territory. At the same time, autocracy—the constitutional realization of one man’s ultimate authority—was anathema to the Roman self-image.

How, then, did the Roman emperors get away with it? According to Beard, the term *civilitas*—the concept of equality among all citizens—covered a multitude of autocratic sins. In the first chapter, “One-Man Rule: the Basics,” Beard presents two texts: Pliny’s *Panegyricus*, delivered in 100 C.E. to the emperor Trajan, and Augustus’s *Res Gestae* (translated by Beard as “What I Did”).

The former, which Beard calls “a job description for the role of Roman emperor,” reflects the hopeful praise of the imperial subject, willing his ideal ruler into being through somewhat over-the-top adulation. The latter, too, functions as a job description, but by the man who originated the role, Rome’s first emperor: Augustus. This work, which Augustus not only had inscribed on the outside of

his tomb but also published as a series of multilingual billboards throughout the empire, offers an (edited) account of his achievements and a master class in the interactive, ubiquitous P.R. needed to legitimize what was originally an extra-constitutional position. Presenting himself as *pater patriae*, the guardian of the nation, Augustus waged a campaign to embed himself into the landscape of the city he ruled as a natural, inevitable and omnipresent element.

Augustus's performance effectively became the playbook for all who followed—a model for those who sought a copacetic relationship with Rome's political stakeholders and for those who crafted a persona at the extremes. Beard takes us through the different facets of this performance, the different genres in which an emperor could present his version of imperial power.

The royal family was central to such narratives. With a back story contaminated by civil war, the legitimacy of imperial rule depended on a smooth and stable succession plan that could avoid such conflict. This, however, was complicated by Roman legal precedent. With no fixed law of primogeniture, each emperor had both greater flexibility in choosing his heir and no way of guaranteeing that his plans would take place.

So too did the concept of dynastic rule conflict with the Roman ethos of meritocracy. To thread this needle, adoption became the primary mechanism of imperial inheritance. It worked as a safeguard for those emperors—and there were many, Augustus included—who had no suitable heir. Regardless, the proliferation of stories about manipulated successions points to the Romans' existential uncertainty and anxiety around issues of imperial transition.

Likewise, the sensationalization of imperial sex lives and marital relations took on a life of its own as a space where the emperors' subjects could imagine and project the extremes of his character. As Beard remarks, "It was almost an ancient cliché that the court was dominated by women trying to exercise control." Beyond issues of female adultery and consequent concerns about paternity, the behavior of imperial women became a locus for Roman conversations about the various powers behind each throne—in effect, a way to voice fears about who was really calling the shots. By advertising their submission and restraint, the women of the imperial household could reaffirm their husband's/father's/brother's adherence to traditional norms; by taking a more public stance, they could signal his subversion of them.

This intrinsically Roman intertwining of the political and personal offers Beard much fodder for drawing connections between the ancient and modern worlds. For ex-

ample, Chapter 3, "Power Dining," is an entertaining and detailed unpacking of the dining room as a performance space for taste, wealth, power, status, generosity, culture—a place where, by definition, everyone must look at everyone else for hours on end, a captive audience at the mercy of their host.

The theatricality of both the presentation and the consumption of food lends itself to Beard's project of sifting out the truths of history-telling rather than of actual history. She examines literary representations of the dinner host's control as a microcosm of imperial rule. As a display of wealth and power, the dinner itself might reflect international reach, the labor of highly specialized slaves and the refinement of taste in both food and entertainment. At the same time, the seating arrangements could define the social status of each guest with (at times mortifying) precision.

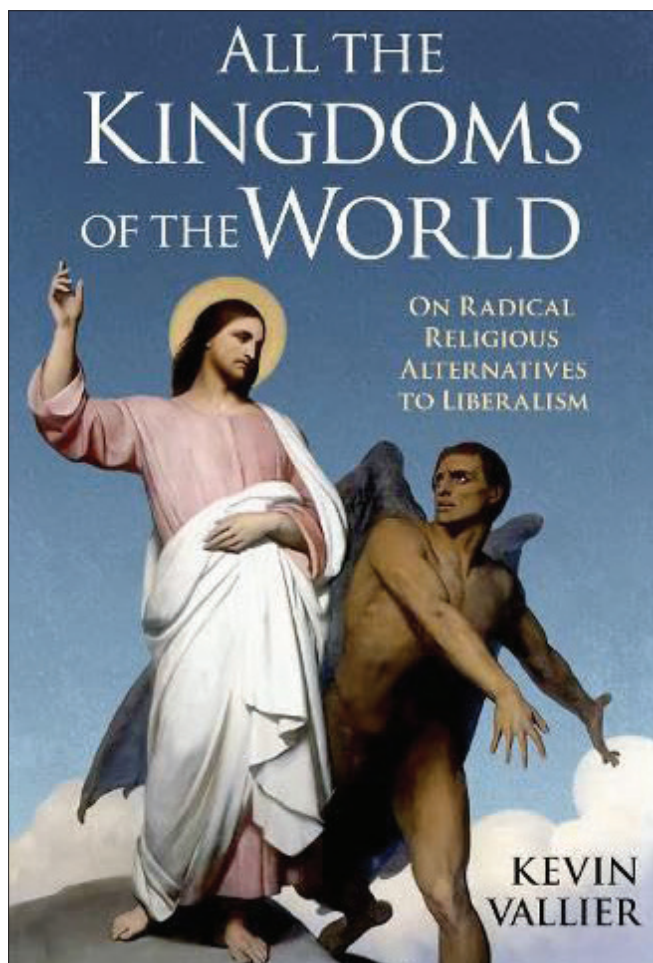
In this space, the possibility of violence, whether by poison, assassination or—in one memorable instance—drowning in rose petals, only heightened the sense of menace underlying such festive occasions. In this regard, the dining room offered Roman authors and emperors a stage on which to act out their anxieties about imperial rule.

To the emperors they offered a chance to gauge how their iteration of the imperial role was landing with their guests/subjects; to the guests and onlookers they offered a window into how far their ruler was willing to disrupt or enforce social norms and, perhaps, a way to present future emperors with lessons about how *not* to handle such interactions. The symbolic significance of such spaces (familiar to any fan of "Downton Abbey" or "The Gilded Age") lends itself to comparison—between classes, tastes, bodies, morals—and offers the historian access to a room where self-reflection and performance are as much on the table as any stuffed dormouse or conger eel.

I would be remiss if I failed to remark on the striking blurbs included on the book's jacket, which are a testament to Beard's role as public intellectual rather than to the work at hand: "a folk hero," "irresistible salty charm," "troll slayer" (this last taken from a 2014 *New Yorker* profile of Beard as scholar, feminist and public figure). These somewhat combative characterizations provide a fine capstone to the author's study of the larger-than-life *personae* attributed to the men in this book who lived, breathed, bathed and blundered. A trailblazer indeed, Mary Beard shows her audience the significance of the (hi)stories we tell, for ourselves as well as our subjects.

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THE FUTURE OF CHRISTENDOM



Oxford University Press / 320p \$30

In the face of the failures of their political traditions to grapple with the problems of our time, American Catholics are willing to try almost anything. And indeed they have, oscillating between positions as extreme as the pious retreat from demonic power of *The Benedict Option* of Rod Dreher and the authoritarian embrace of power of the new integralists. In his new book, *All the Kingdoms of the World*, Kevin Vallier engages with Catholic integralists, but he opens a bigger question: Is there such a thing as a Catholic politics?

Vallier positions himself as a political liberal trying to come to grips with integralism—in other words, as someone committed in principle to something like the liberal distinction between religion and politics grappling with a system of thought that rejects that separation. (The website *The Josias*, which describes itself as “a manual of Catholic Integralism,” explicitly grounds the central conclusion of integralism, that “the temporal power must be subordinated to the spiritual power,” in terms of “rejecting the liberal separation of politics from concern with the end of

human life.”) He offers an example of the rich fruits to be had from sympathetic, charitable engagement with a body of thought with which one disagrees.

Integralists have particular reason to be grateful to him. In giving the benefit of the doubt to the integralists, Vallier has made a strong case for them, identifying areas where they need to buttress their arguments. Tellingly, while internet trolls have denigrated Vallier and his project, some thoughtful thinkers associated with integralism have already engaged this book charitably and profitably, most notably Thomas Pink.

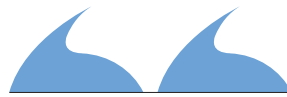
Vallier’s fellow political liberals are also in his debt. Since the end of the Cold War, it has become common for pundits to remind each other that “religion is back.” But Vallier does more than repeat this mantra. He has taken the next logical step: entering into the world of religious thinkers who do not take liberalism as a given. Rather than dismissing the integralists as unreasonable, marginal or ideological, he offers an account of integralism as not only cogent but responsive to the desires and aspirations of a wide variety of people today. He builds up integralism not to tear down liberalism but to prepare liberals for the challenges ahead. He urges them not to be complacent about that future.

But the book was perhaps most highly anticipated by a third group of readers: Christians who are fully committed neither to integralism nor liberalism. Where does it leave them?

This is where Vallier has the fewest answers. His message to them runs something like this: Integralism represents a faithful rendering of the Catholic tradition on politics, but it is no longer available to us today. He suggests they take up a hybrid model of integralism and the Benedict Option, a localist integration from below that is friendly to liberalism. This option will not be particularly attractive to many, and one wonders if he leaves them where they started: liberalism as the only game left in town, vulnerable to its next would-be successor.

Vallier knows that integralism is at least in part a response to a popular fear and hunger that liberalism has not fully succeeded in satisfying, which is why his book does so much more than “unmask” the integralists. The book might sound an alarm for Christians whose ideological commitments to liberalism render the allure of integralism opaque.

Catholic readers of *All the Kingdoms* might disagree on a crucial question: Does Vallier overstate the warrant for integralism in the Catholic tradition? I believe he does, but I also recognize an answer to that question hinges on a host of other controverted themes: the nature of the church; the possibility of doctrinal development and change; the na-



Vallier knows that integralism is at least in part a response to a popular fear and hunger that liberalism has not fully succeeded in satisfying.

ture of tradition; the nature of politics and practical reason; the correct interpretation of “Dignitatis Humanae”; and of course, the nature and trajectory of modernity, liberalism and democracy.

But this tradition has been woefully neglected for some time. Is there such a thing as Christian political theology? Supporters of integralism certainly think so. Its Christian critics who champion a liberal alternative often do, too. But the evidence is mixed.

Many Christians act as though the Gospel offers a full program for political life. Others see it as apolitical—if not anti-political. The third, most interesting camp sees Athens and Jerusalem in a dialogue through Rome. Pope Benedict XVI, for instance, saw a Christian theology of politics as a mutual, critical dialogue between faith and reason. Among other things, that mutual dialogue helps faith to see through reason that much of what it takes as unchanging principles are, in fact, contingent states of affairs, because politics itself is contingent. And faith helps reason to see its tendency for hubris, to recognize the need for humility in fashioning social arrangements.

In this view, the Gospel has profound implications for our common life here and now, and leads us into ever-fruitful dialogue between faith and reason. But it does not offer any instant recipes for politics, much less a long list of immutable principles—the traditions around political thought are invaluable, but much of what we thought was sacrosanct simply is not. There is no “political theology” in the sense of a systemic program readily applied to politics. Neither a tightly unified system nor a laundry list of unrelated items, the tradition of Catholic political philosophy, like Catholic thought in general, is grounded in deep truths that we tend to forget, distort and clumsily reclaim, leading us to oscillate between polar oppositions.

It is here that meaningful inquiry into politics really begins for Christians. While I appreciate Vallier’s modest proposal for a reconceived Benedict Option, what we need is something at once more modest and more ambitious: something that will not seek to distill a political program from the Gospel but will take the breadth and depth of human experience, both active and contemplative, in the light of faith and reason. It will have to find room to ask fundamental questions about the nature of the person, truth, reason and community, both political and ecclesial—even if such themes do not always sell books or win votes. It must also continue the task of reckoning where it finds itself, following rare lights like Alasdair MacIntyre and Charles Taylor. In short, it will have to wrestle with the dynamics of being in and not of the world, and living in a particular time and place even as we are called to a faith in

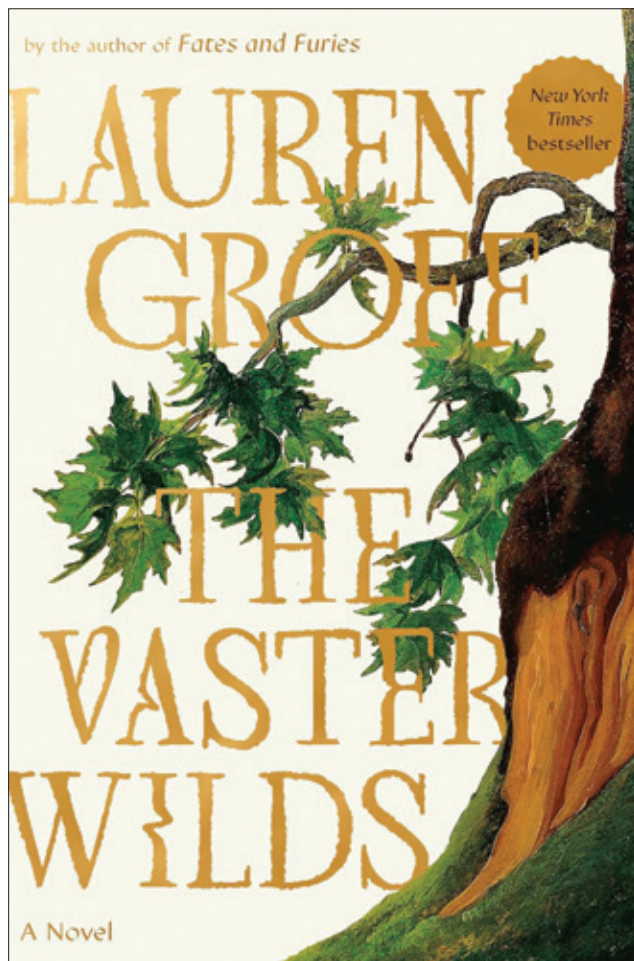
a God who is Lord of the universe.

Thanks to Vallier’s thoughtful work, integralism looks a great deal like a system to be dropped onto politics, not unlike naïve strains of social contract theory or Marxism. It is, to be sure, a retrieval of aspects of Catholic tradition that reminds us of how little most of us know of that tradition. But, like too many forms of political Catholicism, it plays into pathologies of modern reason in its claims that practical reason can speak with the certitude and universality of theoretical reason, as though politics were geometry. It is not.

As a student of the late James Schall, S.J., I like subtitles. Vallier’s is *On Radical Religious Alternatives to Liberalism*. But integralism does not turn out to be such a radical alternative.

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A HEROINE'S JOURNEY



Riverhead Books / 272p \$28

Lauren Groff has built herself an international reputation with her fiction over the last dozen years. Her 2018 short-story collection *Florida* is Pulitzer Prize-worthy. She has published several brilliant novels including *Arcadia* (2012), the acclaimed *Fates and Furies* (2015) and *Matrix* (2021).

Her newest novel, *The Vaster Wilds*, follows *Matrix* as the second installment of a planned trilogy. While *Matrix* is, in part, about 12th-century Catholicism, one of Groff's topics in *The Vaster Wilds* is 17th-century Protestantism. An adventure story set in that century, wherein a teenage girl takes a *Robinson Crusoe*-like journey by foot and by boat through the late-winter wilds of the New World. On her way, the girl contemplates God, religion, nature and a woman's station in a world dominated by men. An inventive story, it inverts Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* by casting a girl—and only briefly, much later on in the novel, the woman—as its heroine.

Groff's story begins when our heroine, a semi-anonymous girl, flees her settlement in Jamestown, Va., carrying

a bag of precious things: two brown, thick and warm (but lice-ridden) coverlets, a hatchet, a knife, a stolen pewter cup and a flint. The girl, “moorish in her make,” was called Lamentations Callat back in England when she lived in the poorhouse. Her name serves as an insult: Lamentations “to remember the stain of her sin upon her” and Callat, the surname of her prostitute mother. The girl is sometimes called Zed, Wench, Child and Fool, but the third-person narrator calls her simply “the girl.”

The reasons for the heroine's flight aren't fully revealed until later in the book. Groff counts on the reader's curiosity to follow her as she is tracked by male pursuers through the unknown and dangerous wilds—its half-frozen rivers and icy forests and their inherent natural hazards—for a few hundred pages before telling us exactly why she fled her settlement.

Near the onset of her wintry flight, the girl prays:

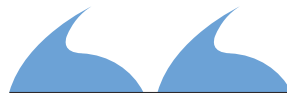
O god, by whom the meek are guided in judgment, and light riseth up for the godly, grant me in all my doubts and uncertainties the grace to ask what thou wouldst have me do that the spirit of wisdom may save me from all false choices and that in thy light I may see light and in thy straight path may not stumble.

(A fervent enough prayer, methinks, but chunks of similarly capitalization-stingy pseudo-Elizabethan diction and syntax abound throughout the novel and doth difficult reading make.)

In any case, the girl tries to convince herself that she is not alone. She carries “my god in my heart always.” Although fighting starvation, avoiding her pursuers and coping with the enormity of the wilderness cause her briefly to lose her faith in God and forces of nature, her determination and a resurgence of her faith help her endure.

She makes her way north as the wintery landscape cracks and gradually melts. Her trek is still difficult but in different ways. She contemplates her early life in England with the mistress who found and saved her from the poorhouse. The mistress calls the girl Zed, another insult, as that was the name for a dead monkey and for being “the least and the littlest.” As a household servant, one of the girl's duties was to care for the mistress's young daughter Bess, named after the queen of the realm but, alas, a “sweet innocent idiot.”

We discover that our heroine loved and cared for Bess, sometimes like a mother and sometimes like a sister. For years in England, the girl and her adoptive family live an impoverished life, with the girl as little more than a pet or



The wilds and its creatures could be dangerous, but men, the girl concludes, are more dangerous than bears.

servant and a caregiver to Bess. Eventually, they leave England on a ship called Blessing, headed to the New World and, hopefully, a better life. Unfortunately, they could not have picked a worse time to sail to the Jamestown settlement. It was winter, the historic “starving time” when Jamestown’s settlers were not only hungry but diseased, dying and fighting with local Indigenous tribes.

Conditions were horrible in England but worse at the fort in the New World. Life becomes even more terrible for the girl after she commits an offense that forces her to flee. She knows that “at least one bad man would be sent after her” because of what she has done. She has been wary of men all of her life, knowing that even the gentleman at the fort sometimes needed to be avoided. But there were other men around who were truly bad: the soldiers “with a red gleam of the devil to them and mercenaries who killed as easy as sleeping.”

The wilds and its creatures could be dangerous, but men, the girl concludes, are more dangerous than bears. Groff adds a contemporarily relevant and universal argument to the girl’s fear:

For what woman has not, walking in the dark of the street or along a path deep in the countryside, sensed the brutal imaginings of a man watching her from his hidden place, and felt the same chills chasing over her skin, and quickened her steps to get away.

That passage is also one of the few times the narrator refers to the girl as a woman.

The narrator throughout is omniscient, so we get inside other human minds besides the girl’s, including her dangerous pursuers from the fort: a Jesuit hermit called Sanctus Ioannes Cavae Arboris (Saint John of the Hollow Tree) and the Powhatan and Piscataway, the Indigenous “people of this place” who protect her. The pseudo-Elizabethan narration becomes anthropomorphic at times, as the thoughts of animals—dogs, bears, wolves and even vultures—are revealed. Dogs weigh their alarm and make decisions, night creatures rustle in the trees without caring, and vultures despair. Similarly, after the girl suffers a head wound from a rock thrown by the hermit, she has visions of birds that prophesy her future and her possible death. She sees beams of sunlight that form the rungs of a ladder with angels “busily moving themselves up and down.”

As she makes her way through the wilds, she starts naming the things she observes on her journey, for that “made things more visible.” The girl figures that naming people was how adults granted power to themselves over

babies and how Englishmen conferred over the new world and its people. The narrator tells us:

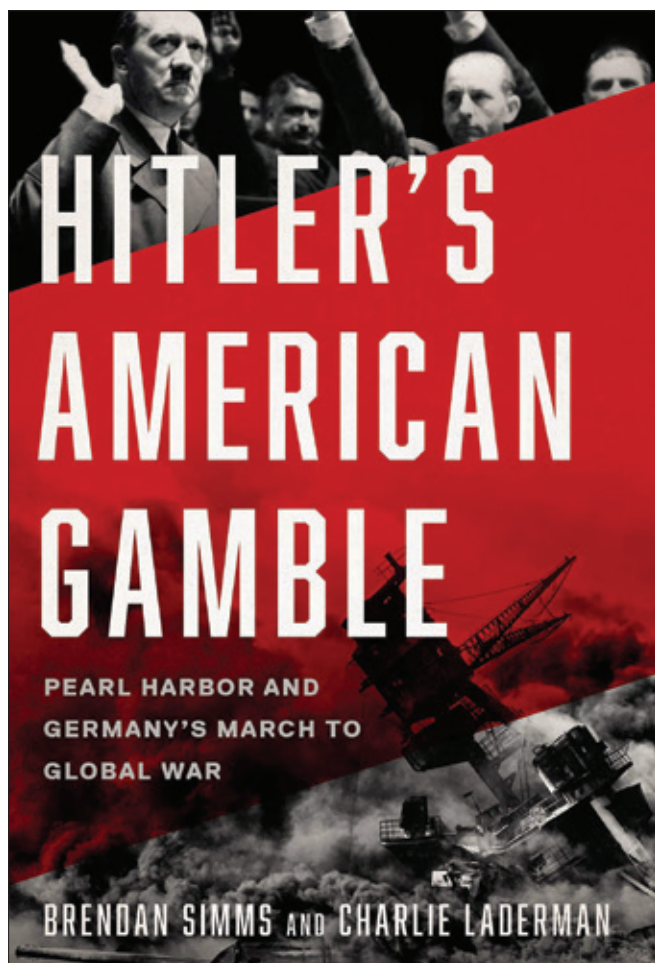
She felt she understood now the first man Adam, how with each name he felt himself growing more powerful, closer to the god who had created and named him. Name after name, Adam felt his dominion tipping into domination until he believed that he owned the world by naming the things in it and that all the things of the world were his to do with as he wished.

The novel is full of Groff’s typical flourishes of poetic genius; the prose, however, written in a deliberately old-fashioned way to reflect the Elizabethan era, can be as slow-moving as the girl’s tortuous journey. Aside from that, I had one other beef with the novel. Even though the girl has lived in the wilds for decades, most of the story unfolds in the first few weeks of her journey. That is followed by a compression of her exploits for the following several decades.

Much seemed to be missing. I would have liked more of the story to be about the *woman*.

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AMERICA'S TWO-FRONT DILEMMA



Basic Books / 528p \$23.99

An embattled European democracy fights to survive an onslaught of authoritarian aggression. The United States rushes weapons and ammunition to the frontlines across the Atlantic yet remains careful to avoid entering the conflict itself. Meanwhile, at home, self-described “America First” politicians raise objections to sending so much military assistance to Europe. Would this not risk involving us in the war directly? Many also point to a rising threat in the Pacific as the real enemy. Can America really spare so much of its own equipment and ammunition stores for Europe with war brewing in Asia?

This discussion will be familiar to those who have been following the ongoing debate on how to balance the United States’ commitment to helping Ukraine repel Russia’s invasion with matching China’s military buildup in the Pacific, especially around Taiwan. Yet it also describes the strategic debate over 80 years ago, on the eve of Japan’s attack on Pearl Harbor and in the nerve-wracking days that followed. This story is told in *Hitler’s American Gamble*, an excellent work by the historians Brendan Simms and Char-

lie Laderman. Books about World War II are ubiquitous in the nonfiction section, but this is the rare recent work with a genuinely new contribution to make, not just to our understanding of the past but also to our understanding of the present.

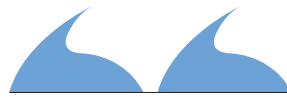
Contrary to what you may think you remember from history class, the Japanese attack on Dec. 7, 1941, did not immediately or automatically bring the United States into the war in Europe. Though hindsight has made the United States going to war with Germany seem inevitable, at the time there was every reason to believe Pearl Harbor would draw American attention away from Europe. With the U.S. Pacific Fleet devastated, Winston Churchill, Joseph Stalin and even Franklin Roosevelt himself were all concerned that the Japanese attack would force an end to critical U.S. Lend-Lease assistance to the British and Soviets, as those supplies were needed in the Pacific. The United States might well have waged a separate, parallel war against Japan, effectively abandoning Europe to the Nazis. If Hitler had not declared war on the United States himself, there is every reason to believe it could have played out that way.

It would not be until Dec. 11 that Germany declared war on the United States (and not the other way around). Simms and Laderman’s book is the story of the five agonizing days from Pearl Harbor to America finally entering the war against Hitler, told in real time, hour by hour, across all the world’s time zones. These are the five days that really shaped the course of the war, finalizing the two sides’ previously shifting coalitions and merging the war in Asia with the war in Europe into the one big conflict we remember today. It was not Pearl Harbor itself but how all the major players reacted that would truly make it a world war.

Each chapter of *Hitler’s American Gamble* covers one day, beginning at midnight in London. We spend time with all the major characters and decision-makers and follow the flow of information and memos among foreign embassies and diplomatic ministries. (I once worked in the U.S. State Department, where my duties included occasionally sprinting down hallways with a lock bag full of classified documents, so following the rhythms of the churning bureaucracy was a highlight in the book for me.)

Yet the authors thankfully also spend lots of time with regular people. We meet German soldiers on the Eastern Front, Jewish civilians in occupied Europe and many a proverbial man on the street, from London, Tokyo, New York and elsewhere. We hear how the American public debated the link between Germany and Japan and whether Pearl Harbor was a reason to oppose Hitler even more, or instead to withdraw aid from the British and the Soviets.

Of particular interest were the narratives of two dif-



ferent American convoys who were at sea during this fateful week. One navigated the treacherous Arctic Ocean in near-total darkness, carrying American Lend-Lease aid from Iceland to the Soviet Union. For all his bluster about World War II, Vladimir Putin forgets how essential U.S. aid was to the Soviet war effort, and how American ammunition, tanks, planes and fuel kept the Soviets in the war against Germany, just like American aid has kept Ukraine in the war against Putin today.

The other convoy consisted of U.S. ships ferrying British troops to Cape Town, South Africa. They were going the long way from Britain to the North African front, going all the way around the African continent to join the fight in Egypt. But Pearl Harbor and the subsequent Japanese attack on the Western European colonies in Asia would see them rerouted—sailing across the Indian Ocean to join the fight in the Pacific instead.

Other forgotten episodes are brought back to life in minute detail. As a Californian, I found the descriptions of the war scares on the West Coast, when San Francisco and Los Angeles became convinced they were under attack by Japan, particularly interesting. Steven Spielberg would later make this the subject of his ill-fated World War II slapstick comedy “1941.” In much-less-funny real life, these anxieties would give rise to racial injustices like Japanese internment and the anti-Mexican Zoot Suit Riots. But at the time, California seemed to call out for aid, with the crippled U.S. Pacific Fleet unable to defend it. California’s rescue, though, would have to come at Europe’s expense.

Above all else, what breaks through in the book is just how much the United States wanted to avoid a two-front war. Prior to Pearl Harbor, Roosevelt was even open to exploring some sort of accommodation with Japan in order to focus on delivering aid to the Allies. When Pearl Harbor came, it was the worst outcome imaginable, forcing Roosevelt into the war he did not want to fight at the expense of the Lend-Lease assistance he had fought so hard to give. The America First proponents were ready to see in the war against Japan the best argument yet for peace with Germany.

It is hard to escape the racial implications. Just as Japan saw itself as striking a blow against white rule in Asia, many xenophobic and antisemitic isolationists in the America First movement were perfectly willing to fight Japan to preserve American power in Asia but seemed to sympathize with Hitler. There is a strange echo in how so many of Donald Trump’s latter-day America First followers seem to relish confrontation with China, all while strangely sympathizing with Russia. Yet in the aftermath of Pearl Harbor, with the Navy in ruins, Roosevelt dared

Many in the America First movement were perfectly willing to fight Japan but seemed to sympathize with Hitler.

not directly confront them by declaring war on Germany himself.

So why did Hitler then give Roosevelt a way out? The long story short is that he had promised Japan he would declare war on the United States if Japan did so first, as a way of encouraging the Japanese attack. Hitler wanted above all else to redirect America’s immense production capacity, which was keeping Britain and the Soviet Union alive. He was happy to declare war on the United States, believing it the necessary price to bog down U.S. forces in the Pacific. It seems it never occurred to him that Roosevelt would simply prioritize the European Theater anyway, agreeing on a “Germany first, Japan second” strategy with Churchill and Stalin. It would be Hitler’s downfall.

Today, the United States again confronts a two-front war debate. The U.S. military is increasingly concerned about the impact aid to Ukraine will have on its own readiness, while American diplomats and internationalists fear the consequences of letting Putin’s war of aggression succeed. The United States is already investing significant effort and resources into increasing defense production to meet Ukraine’s needs. A lesson of both the book and the current conflict in Ukraine is just how much grand strategy in war is shaped not just by tactical success on any specific battlefield but by the big picture of production and logistics.

World War II was won in the factories and fields of America, which powered and fed a global war effort from the islands of the South Pacific to the fields of Ukraine. As war looms over these places yet again, the most important question in U.S. foreign policy is also a familiar one: Can America produce its way out of a two-front dilemma?

Antonio De Loera-Brust is a former Joseph A. O’Hare fellow at **America**. He has worked in the U.S. House of Representatives and served in the Biden administration as special assistant to Secretary of State Antony Blinken. He lives in Yolo County, Calif.

ART THAT LASHES, PIERCES, DISRUPTS

By Joe Hoover

The only unfortunate thing about the winner of this year's Foley Poetry Contest, "The Patron Saint of Sliding Glass Doors," is that when I read the title, I immediately thought of the 1998 Gwyneth Paltrow romantic comedy (which I've actually never seen) called "Sliding Doors."

Whatever the merits of the film, the poem by James Davis May about sliding doors is that superb piece of writing that does a lot of labor but does not feel labored. It dives into what is tiny and four-legged and amphibious—a tree frog, of all things!—and pans out to what is universal and bipedal: human envy, the hunger for prayer. Out of this tiny frog the poet weaves a tiny charged theology of the world. This bit of writing is worth your while, worth even a few reads as you go deeper and deeper into its beauty.

To select the Foley winner, we whittled 500-plus poems down to our top 30 strongest poems. We then brought the 30 down to 27 when we realized that three poets had disqualified themselves by going far above the 45-line limit. (A kindly reminder from one writer to another: Read those guidelines.)

Not every one of the final 27 poems works as a whole, but lines catch you; they work as a world unto themselves:

- "My mother loves to retell plots—mystery, romance, Seinfeld—and she expects that you'll be moved."
- "For years I was convinced oafish was/ a type of fish...."
- From a poem in which a family moves from the northern climes down to New Orleans: "Within the week I awoke to snow,/ like I'd brought an old friend with me from Minnesota."
- An utterly sad poem based on Michael Pollan's *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, about piglets living in unspeakably miserable quarters, states: "Premature weaning leaves a lifelong craving/ to suck, chew—a need piglets gratify/ in confinement, biting the tail of the animal/ in front of them."
- "Your ashes grazed the treetops/ and everybody smiled./ I shook twenty hands,// watched the cars go,/ then knelt/ by racks of thorns...."
- "We often underestimate/ The teeth of water.... The only thing that cuts mountains/ Is stream...."
- A sparrow takes grubs from the skull of a deer: "Take, eat my memory// of the woods, Swallow my swift/ witness of this earth."

My co-judges for the 2024 contest—last year's winner,

Laurinda Lind, and an *America* O'Hare fellow, Christine Lenahan—went back and forth over a poem called "Gaza," by Kirby Wright, and whether it should be one of the runners-up. Is it too one-sided? Anytime you write about the horrors taking place in Gaza, do you have to name what Hamas did in Israel? Does a poem have to be perfectly "fair"? Can there be anything "perfectly fair" said about that war? Is it a genocide? If its people are being massacred, shouldn't Hamas just give up, to stop the massacre? All this spurred by a 10-line poem.

We eventually settled on "Gaza" (well, two of us did) as one of our three runners-up, along with "Animals," by Hannah Ahn, and "01100111 01101111 01100100 01100100 01100101 01110011 01110011," by Jon Saviours. (Yes, that is its title.) These poems will be published in our July/August issue.

It was a pleasure to sit down and give a close read to our 27 finalists and in pinpoint detail discuss with Laurinda and Christine each phrase, each idea, what they mean, how they work or do not work. Words matter, space matters, commas, ellipses, breaths in the line, broken rhythm, dynamic range; every little eyelash matters in a good poem, so tightly constructed does it need to be.

We are grateful for everyone who shared with us all of these details, large or small, whether veteran poets or beginners—those who dared open themselves to the impossible and frankly ridiculous thing of being named "winner."

I don't know that you can actually "rank" art, but you can declare what poem works, what really works. You can notice and signal to the world which poem *does something*. Like an edgy tech start-up, it "disrupts" you; it lingers in your mind, pierces the mist of human generality and lashes you to what is vital, particular and beautiful. Poems like these at the very least deserve more eyes on them, and we are more than happy to make that happen.

Joe Hoover, S.J., is America's poetry editor and producer of the new film "The Allegory."

THE PATRON SAINT OF SLIDING GLASS DOORS

By James Davis May

2024 FOLEY POETRY WINNER



There's a sense that because we don't see it until it's already here—its ghost-toned belly pressed flat against the sliding glass—that the tree frog reveals itself each night like a vision, rather than what I know it really does, which is to climb into view from some dark mulchy haven beneath the deck's diminutive jungle of elephant ears and roses, feet secreting an adhesive that makes this suspension possible, which, though not flight, is just as impressive and seems so much more stoic—no flapping or tilting to make or catch a current, just the grasping of the ungraspable surface, then waiting for the feast the light provides, those diaphanous bodies and iridescent wings.

Surely, there's more to this life than just hunger replaced by hunger—and by surely, I mean I pray, which is why I'm out here in the dark now, studying the light we live in and how the frog is an almost imperceptible sliver in that light, until I get close enough to see its body has the brightness of an emerald you might find in a children's book illustration and seems to glow in the yellow window glow that from a distance someone going by might mistake for perpetual happiness, the sort we assign to the people who live in the houses we drive past and benignly covet without knowing anything of their struggles, their cancers, strokes, divorces, and regrets.

If we could see the invisible saints watching over houses, whether imagined or not, or read the transcribed prayers rising like heat through roofs each evening—would we know more about hope or pain, fear or safety? Would those saints seem helpless or helpful? Would or could it be enough to just know they're there? The frog will not be there in the morning, just the loopy cursive its body carved through the condensation as the meal progressed, more board game path than scripture, more chance than design, but still a testament to both the absence and presence of the life that pulses on the other side.

James Davis May is the author of two poetry collections, most recently *Unusually Grand Ideas* (Louisiana State University Press, 2023).



Who Will Lift the Cup of Praise Today?

June brings new reasons for joy, like the chirping of birds and the opening of fresh blossoms. The liturgical feast of Corpus Christi starts the month and provides a psalm of thanksgiving that sets the tone for the following readings throughout the month.

The psalm evokes the context of an ancient offering: “I will raise the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord” (Ps 116:13). What does it mean to lift up the cup of salvation? Think of giving a toast for the bride or groom at a wedding, where the banquet hall is filled with guests who raise their glasses in a toast. This distinctive public gesture signals approval of the union but also thanks for being part of the celebration. Similarly, in ancient practice, raising a cup at a sacrificial ritual was a public act of thanksgiving for God’s blessings. In this particular psalm, it is a public acknowledgement that God responds to the laments of the desperate.

Heartfelt thanksgiving does not come from a void, but

is inspired by God’s action. In Psalm 116, the act of praise acknowledges a previous emptiness that was like a spiritual death. “I was caught by the cords of death; the snares of Sheol had seized me” (Ps 116:3). Sojourners who rediscover a path that does not cause stumbling find new enthusiasm for the journey: “I shall walk before the Lord in the land of the living” (Ps 116:9). This internal distress is the catalyst for public praise and gestures of thanksgiving like lifting up the cup of salvation.

The early Christians recognized the Eucharistic celebration as their own “cup of praise.” As we today reflect on these images in our Masses throughout the Sundays of June, may the readings help us to recognize moments when God labored to bring us back to life. If we discover these moments in prayer, it will become our turn to raise a cup in thanksgiving before a community of believers. “My vows to the Lord I will pay in the presence of all his people” (Ps 116:14).

CORPUS CHRISTI, JUNE 2, 2024

How to Offer a Sacrifice of Thanksgiving

TENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (B), JUNE 9, 2024

How to Bind the Strong Man

ELEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (B), JUNE 16, 2024

How to Grow the Kingdom of God With the Smallest Act

TWELFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (B), JUNE 23, 2024

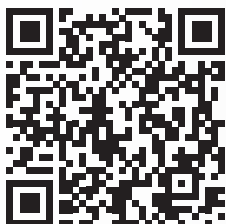
How to Calm the Storm Before It Destroys You

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (B), JUNE 30, 2024

How to Live Again After a Near-Fatal Accident



Victor M. Cancino, S.J., lives on the Flathead Indian Reservation in western Montana and is the pastor of St. Ignatius Mission. He received his licentiate in sacred Scripture from the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome.



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Defending Democracy

How poll workers show ‘faithful citizenship’

By Chris Crawford



At its annual gathering in Baltimore last fall, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops re-issued “Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship.” This document can help Catholics make informed decisions on how they will vote in the 2024 election, including how to consider big questions about such topics as religious liberty, care for the poor, protecting the environment and what the bishops rightfully call the “pre-eminent priority” of protecting the unborn. Catholics should take this document seriously. It can serve as a counterbalance to partisan attempts to co-opt our religious beliefs or identity.

Working or volunteering for candidates who share our values is one obvious form of faithful citizenship. Early in my career, I felt called to help elect pro-life Republicans to office; I was a political organizer at the Susan B. Anthony List, the nation’s largest pro-life political organization. In recent years, I have been trying to convince politicians from both parties to prioritize issues that make it easier to start and raise a family. As an individual, I have also made a point of voting against candidates who took part in attempts to overturn the 2020 election.

This moment in our history demands that we work to ensure a free and fair election, as well as a peaceful transition to a new presidential term. Each of us should discern the ways that we can protect the democratic institutions that preserve our way of life. My organization, Protect Democracy, has partnered with Interfaith America to create a list of actions for faith communities to take in order to protect our

election system in 2024.

I am passionate about my work protecting free and fair elections because we cannot effectively address any of the issues mentioned in “Faithful Citizenship,” from protecting the unborn to creating a more just economy, without a functioning democracy. All of the freedoms that we enjoy, including our religious freedom, are protected by our democratic institutions. The hallmarks of a democratic form of government in the United States are less certain than they have been in recent memory, but faith-based organizations are well positioned to help protect them.

With tens of thousands of church communities across the country, Catholics are a vital network uplifting our pluralistic society. In addition to these churches, there are thousands of Catholic charities and nonprofits that step up and serve during crises, and help hold our communities together.

This important work can be done free from partisanship. For example, our elections depend upon approximately one million people to serve as poll workers or election judges at our polling locations. Individual Catholics should consider signing up to work at the polls during the 2024 election, and Catholic churches, schools and nonprofits should help meet this important need by giving paid leave to employees who do so. Getting started is as easy as signing up with an organization such as Power the Polls, which will send your information directly to your local election office.

At a time of deep division in our

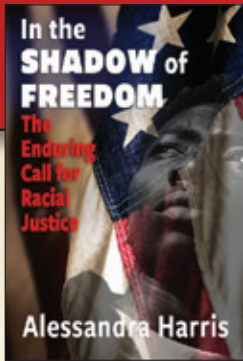
country, Catholics can also play a major role in building understanding across differences. Interfaith America and Protect Democracy have prepared a comprehensive guide for developing respectful dialogue, including the U.S.C.C.B.’s “Civilize It” initiative. Additionally, Catholic community leaders can meet with local election officials to get a better sense of how our elections are run, and can work with other civic leaders to increase trust in our elections.

There are a multitude of other nonpartisan ways that Catholics can support the infrastructure of our elections during this election year. They can help provide a more positive, peaceful voting experience at polling locations by serving as poll chaplains—clergy who provide a peaceful, nonpartisan presence and encouragement to voters at the polls. They can share accurate information on where and how to vote. Churches in the United States also have a rich tradition of serving as polling locations themselves, following guidelines that respect the First Amendment while providing a safe, accessible space for voters to cast their ballots.

Simply choosing the right candidate cannot be our only contribution to our country in 2024; we must commit to protecting the very foundations of our democracy. With the tools of Catholic social teaching and our belief in our republican form of government, we should seize this opportunity to serve our community.

Chris Crawford is a policy strategist at Protect Democracy.

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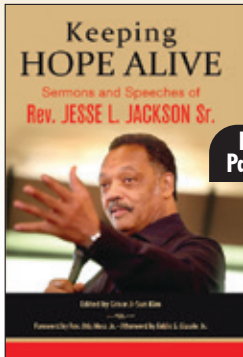
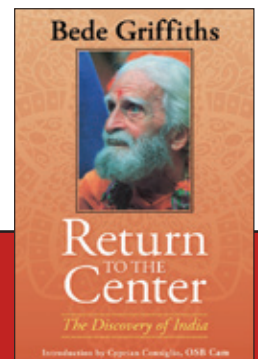
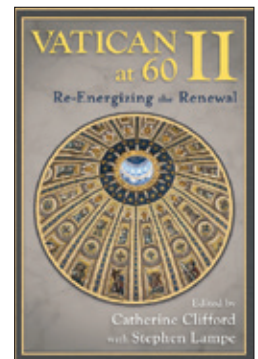
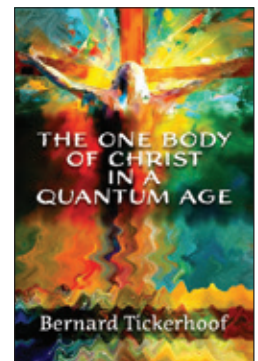
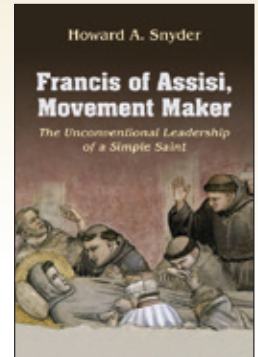
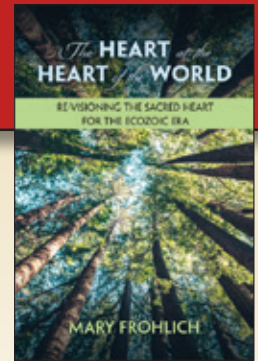
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Return to the Center

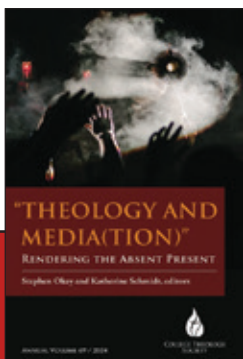
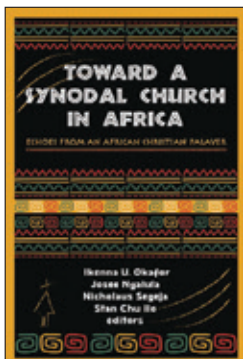
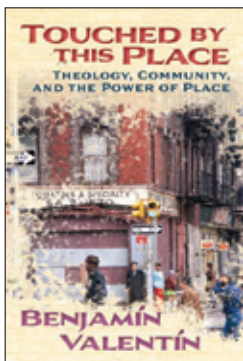
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