

Articles of Interest
For
2 October 2022

Sunday, 25 September 2022

Richard Rohr's Daily Meditation

From the Center for Action and Contemplation



Week Thirty-Nine: A Spirituality of
Imperfection

Discovering the Little Way

During Richard Rohr's novitiate year of becoming a Franciscan, he discovered the writings of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux (1873–1897). Father Richard describes Thérèse's teaching as "a spirituality of imperfection":

I have often mentioned my love for Thérèse of Lisieux, a French Carmelite nun with minimal formal education, who in her short, hidden life of only twenty-four years captured the essence of Jesus' core teachings on love. Thérèse was declared a Doctor of the Church in 1997 [1], which means her teaching is seen as thoroughly reliable and trustworthy. She "'democratized' holiness," as Brother Joseph Schmidt (1934–2022) said, "making it clear that holiness is within the reach of anyone willing to do God's will in love at each successive moment as life unfolds." [2]

Thérèse came into a nineteenth-century Catholic Church that often believed in an angry, punitive God, perfectionism, and validation by personal good behavior—which is a very unstable and illusory path. In the midst of this rigid environment, Thérèse was convinced that her message, taught to her by Jesus himself, was "totally new." [3]

The gospel of radical grace had been forgotten by many Christians, so much so that Thérèse had to call it "new."

Thérèse called this simple, childlike path her "little way." It is a spirituality of imperfection. In a letter to priest Adolphe Roulland (1870–1934), she writes: "Perfection seems simple to me, I see it is sufficient to recognize one's nothingness and to abandon oneself as a child into God's arms." [4] Any Christian "perfection" is, in fact, our ability to include, forgive, and accept our imperfection. As I've often said, we grow spiritually much more by doing it wrong than by doing it right. That might just be the central lesson of how spiritual growth happens, yet nothing in us wants to believe it.

If there is such a thing as human perfection, it seems to emerge precisely from how we handle the imperfection that is everywhere, especially in ourselves. What a clever place for God to hide holiness, so that only the humble, "little," and earnest will find it! A "perfect" person ends up being one who can consciously forgive and include imperfection rather than the ones who think they are totally above and beyond imperfection. It becomes rather obvious once we say it out loud.

Near the end of her life, Thérèse explained her little way to her sister, and this became part of her autobiography *Story of a Soul*. In contrast to the "big way" of heroic perfectionism, she teaches, in essence, that as a little one "with all [her] imperfections," God's love is drawn toward her. God has to love her and help her because she is "too small to climb the rough stairway of perfection." [5] With utter confidence, she "believed herself infinitely loved by Infinite Love."

[1] Pope John Paul II, “[Proclamation of St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face as a ‘Doctor of the Church,’](#)” homily, October 19, 1997.

[2] Joseph F. Schmidt, *Walking the Little Way of Thérèse of Lisieux: Discovering the Path of Love* (Frederick, MD: The Word Among Us Press, 2012), 22.

[3] *Story of a Soul: The Autobiography of St. Thérèse of Lisieux*, trans. John Clarke, 2nd ed. (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 1976), 207.

[4] Thérèse to Adolphe Roulland, May 9, 1987, in *Thérèse of Lisieux: General Correspondence*, vol. 2, 1890–1897, trans. John Clarke (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 1988), 1094.

[5] *Story of a Soul*, 207.

[6] Louis Liagre, *A Retreat with St. Thérèse*, trans. P. J. Owen (London: Douglas Organ, 1947), 22. Note: This is the book that Father Richard read during his novitiate year.

Adapted from Richard Rohr, [Falling Upward: A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life](#) (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2011), xxii; and

The Little Way: A Spirituality of Imperfection (Albuquerque, NM: Center for Action and Contemplation, 2007). [Available as MP3 audio download.](#)

Image credit: Arthur Allen, *Daily Meditations* 9 (detail), 2022, photograph,

France, used with permission. Katrina Lillian Sorrentino, *Entelechy* 8 (detail), 2022, photograph, Spain, used with permission. Belinda Rain, *Frost* (detail), 1972, California, public domain. Jenna Keiper & Leslye Colvin, 2022, triptych art, United States. [Click here to enlarge image.](#)

This week’s images appear in a form inspired by early Christian/Catholic triptych art: a threefold form that tells a unified story.

Image inspiration: *We pause to appreciate the seemingly insignificant and experience the awe of the simple and unexpected.*

Story From Our Community

In a way, we are perfect if we allow ourselves to accept that we are not perfect. Perfect in the eyes of God with great potential, but imperfect in that we are not going to get it right all the time. We will make mistakes. —J.E.B.

Prayer For Our Community

God, Lord of all creation, lover of life and of everything, please help us to love in our very small way what You love infinitely and everywhere. We thank You that we can offer just this one prayer and that will be more than enough, because in reality every thing and every one is connected, and nothing stands alone. To pray for one part is really to pray for the whole, and so we do. Help us each day to stand for love, for healing, for the good, for the diverse unity of the Body of Christ and all creation, because we know this is what You desire: as Jesus prayed, that all may be one. We offer our prayer together with all the holy names

of God, we offer our prayer together with Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Monday, 25 September 2022

Richard Rohr's Daily Meditation

From the Center for Action and Contemplation



Week Thirty-Nine: A Spirituality of Imperfection

A Gospel of Humility

In this talk, Richard unpacks the parable of the tax collector and the Pharisee (Luke 18:9–14), showing how Jesus affirmed a spirituality of imperfection:

With this parable, Jesus invites us to struggle with the contrast between a spirituality of perfection and what I'm calling a spirituality of imperfection. Notice the beginning lines: "Then he spoke this parable, to some who trusted in themselves, that they were righteous and therefore despised others. 'Two men went up to the Temple to pray, one a Pharisee, the other a tax collector'" (Luke 18:9–10). Jesus, a consummate Jew, uses examples from his own culture and time. According to common definitions of the day, the Pharisees are the good guys and tax collectors are the bad guys. The tax collectors are those who have totally aligned with the Roman Empire, charging money to their own Jewish people, and giving it to the Empire. No one likes the tax collectors, and everyone looks up to the Pharisees. The Pharisees are simply religious people trying to obey the law, just like faithful Catholics or Bible-reading Protestants today. And as always, Jesus, with his nondual way of thinking, turns it all on its head.

"The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people. Extortioners, adulterers, or even this poor tax collector here. I fast twice a week. I give tithes of all that I possess'" (18:11–12). None of us would be so foolish as to state our spiritual credit so forthrightly, but we do feel it inside. We think: "I'm a good person. I don't steal; I don't cheat." We've all fashioned our positive, superior self-images on why we're right and why we're good. In contrast, "The tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven. Instead, he beat his breast, saying 'God be merciful to me, a sinner.'" Jesus said, "This man went down to his house justified—rather than the other" (18:13–14).

This repositions the whole role of religion. Didn't most of us think that it's all a meritocracy? I certainly did! Many religious people think that it's all a merit badge system—all achievement, accomplishment, performance, and perfection. The good people win and the bad people lose. Of course, once we cast anything as a win-lose scenario, the irony is that everybody loses. Why can't people see that competitive games are not the way to go?

I'm convinced that Jesus' good news is that God's choice is always for the excluded one. Jesus learned this from his Jewish tradition: God always chooses the rejected son, the barren woman, the people enslaved in Egypt or exiled in Babylon. It's not a winner's script in the Bible—it's a loser's script. It's a loser's script where, ironically, everybody wins.

Tuesday, 27 September 2022

Richard Rohr's Daily Meditation

From the Center for Action and Contemplation



Week Thirty-Nine: A Spirituality of
Imperfection

Strength in Weakness

In this homily, Father Richard reflects on the paradoxical relationship between weakness and strength:

I must be up front with you. I don't really understand why God created the world in this upside-down way. I do not know why "power is at its best in weakness," as Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 12:9. I cannot pretend to understand God, but this is what I see: People who have moved from one seeming success to another seldom understand success at all—except for their own very limited version. People who fail to do something right, by even their own definition of right, are those who often break through to enlightenment and compassion.

Paul can talk in this paradoxical way about power and weakness because he meditated on the mystery of the cross. The one who was a failure became the redeemer. The one who looked naked and weak and like a loser became the ultimate winner. And so Paul sums it up in his beautiful philosophy, ending with the line, "It is when I am weak that I am strong" (2 Corinthians 12:10).

Let's honestly admit almost none of us believe that. We think it's when we're strong that we're strong. But no, *it's when we're weak that we're strong*. It doesn't

make a bit of sense to the rational, logical mind. Only people of the Spirit understand how true it is. The Twelve Step Program made it the first step: We have to experience our powerlessness before we can experience our power.

Paul says he experienced God telling him, "My grace is sufficient for you. Power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9). But the philosophy of the United States of America is that power is made perfect in more power. Just try to get powerful: more guns, more weapons, more wars, more influence, more billionaires. Everybody's trying to get higher, trying to get up, up, up. While Jesus, surprise of surprises, is going down.

The experience of powerlessness is where we all must begin, and Alcoholics Anonymous is honest and humble enough to state this, just as Jesus himself always went where the pain was. Wherever there was human suffering, Jesus was concerned about it and sought to heal it in the very moment of encounter. It is both rather amazing and very sad that we pushed it all off into a future reward system for those who were "worthy"—as if any of us are.

Is it this human pain that we fear? Powerlessness, the state of being shipwrecked, is an experience we all share anyway, if we are sincere, but Bill Wilson (1895–1971), co-founder of AA, discovered we are not very good at that either. He called it "denial." It seems we are not that free to be honest, or even aware, because most of our wounds are buried in the unconscious. So, it is absolutely essential that we find a spirituality that reaches to that hidden level. If not, nothing really changes.

Wednesday, 28 September 2022

Richard Rohr's Daily Meditation

From the Center for Action and Contemplation



Week Thirty-Nine: A Spirituality of Imperfection

Tiny Opportunities to Love

Memoirist Heather King spent a year praying with Thérèse of Lisieux's insights, and describes how Thérèse practiced her "little way" through relationships:

Some of the best-known anecdotes about Thérèse concern her saintlike, though seemingly small efforts with respect to her fellow nuns:

1. She overcame her instinctive dislike of a particular nun, and . . . [exhibited] such charity that the sister actually thought Thérèse felt a special fondness for her.
2. She stifled her almost compulsive desire to turn around and glare at the nun behind her in choir who made a clicking noise (apparently by tapping her rosary against her teeth), realizing that the more charitable act would be to pretend that the sound was music to Christ's ears and endure the annoyance in silence.
3. Every evening at dinnertime Thérèse took it upon herself to usher a particularly vexatious elderly nun from chapel to her place at table in the refectory, even going the extra mile to lovingly cut the crabapple's bread.

Saints do not live in some other world. . . . They live in the same world we do, and they show us that spirituality is intensely down-to-earth. We learn to love through frustration, disappointment, and failure. We learn through the seemingly trivial incidents of our daily lives.

“When I *am feeling* nothing . . . then is the moment for seeking opportunities, *nothings*, which please Jesus. . . . For example, a smile, a friendly word, when I would want to say nothing, or put on a look of annoyance,” [1] Thérèse wrote, and “I have no desire to go to Lourdes to have ecstasies. I prefer (the monotony of sacrifice)!” [2]

King applies the spirit of Thérèse's small, loving acts to her own life:

I began to see the almost superhuman strength required to refrain from, say, repeating a juicy bit of gossip, or rolling my eyes, or allowing my voice to get harsh when I was upset. I began to sense as well that, just *because* they're so difficult, such acts perhaps do far more good than we can ever know. Standing patiently in line helped the other people in line to be patient as well. Blessing the other person in traffic, even though nobody heard or saw, somehow encouraged someone else to bless the next person. When the neighborhood noise bothered me, I sometimes took to starting with one corner of my apartment complex, visualizing the person or people who lived there, and working my way around, praying for the inhabitants of each. (Other times I took to tearing out my hair and cursing.) . . .

We can try, at great personal sacrifice, to be perfectly righteous, a perfect friend, perfectly responsive, perfectly available, perfectly forgiving. But at the heart of our efforts must lie the knowledge that, by

ourselves, we can do, heal, or correct nothing. The point is not to be perfect, but to “perfectly” leave Christ to do, heal, and correct in us what he wills.

Thursday, 29 September 2022

Richard Rohr's Daily Meditation

From the Center for Action and Contemplation



Week Thirty-Nine: A Spirituality of Imperfection

Accepting Our Imperfections

Richard shares how the teachings of Thérèse of Lisieux have supported his own spiritual journey:

French Catholicism in Thérèse’s time emphasized an ideal of human perfection, but Thérèse humbly trusted her own experience and taught the spirituality of imperfection instead. Thérèse is one of my favorite saints, perhaps because I’m an Enneagram Type One. The trap for the One is self-created perfectionism, which makes us dissatisfied and disappointed by nearly everything, starting with ourselves.

Thérèse has helped me to embrace imperfection—my own and others. When her sister Céline was upset with her own faults, Thérèse instructed, “If you want to bear in peace the trial of not pleasing yourself, you will give [the Virgin Mary] a sweet home.” [1] If we pay attention even for an hour, we observe how hard it is to be “displeasing” to ourselves! Often, this is the emotional snag that sends us into terribly bad moods without even realizing the origins of these moods. To resolve this problem, Thérèse teaches us to let go of the

very need to “think well of yourself” to begin with! That’s our ego talking, not God.

Worthiness is not the issue; the issue is trust and surrender. As Thérèse understood, “Jesus does not demand great actions from us but simply *surrender* and *gratitude*.” [2] Let’s resolve this once and for all: *You’re not worthy!* None of us are. Don’t even go down that worthiness road. It’s a game of denial and pretend. We’re all saved by grace. We’re all being loved in spite of ourselves. That’s why I can also say, “*You’re all worthy!*” But your worthiness has nothing to do with you, and everything to do with the goodness of God.

Brené Brown, a contemporary teacher who extols the gifts of imperfection, writes:

It is in the process of embracing our imperfections that we find our truest gifts: courage, compassion, and connection. . . .

When we can let go of what other people think and own our story, we gain access to our worthiness—the feeling that we are enough just as we are and that we are worthy of love and belonging. When we spend a lifetime trying to distance ourselves from the parts of our lives that don’t fit with who we think we’re supposed to be, we stand outside of our story and hustle for our worthiness by constantly performing, perfecting, pleasing, and proving. . . .

There is a line from Leonard Cohen’s song “Anthem” that serves as a reminder to me when . . . I’m trying to control everything and make it perfect. The line is, “There is a crack in everything. That’s how the light gets in.” [3] . . . This line helps me remember the beauty of the cracks (and the messy house and the imperfect manuscript and the too-tight jeans). It reminds me that our imperfections are not inadequacies; they

are reminders that we're all in this together. Imperfectly, but together. [4]

Friday, 30 September 2022

Richard Rohr's Daily Meditation

From the Center for Action and Contemplation



Week Thirty-Nine: A Spirituality of Imperfection

Acting In Conscious Love

A few years ago, Father Richard was invited by Carmelite priest Bob Colaresi on a pilgrimage to Thérèse's community in France. Richard shares:

Our small group of five visited the infirmary where Thérèse died. I stood nearest the window. I could see the black hole in the bushes that Thérèse likened to her own soul when she was in pain, dying of tuberculosis, and trying to believe that Jesus still loved her. The sister guiding our tour was telling us the story of Thérèse's death when she suddenly paused and said, "We have a visitor!" The way she said it, we all got goose bumps!

We followed the sister's gaze and saw by the window a beautiful orange and yellow butterfly. It was only April 3, way too early for butterflies in northern France. She said, "Let it out, let it out!" Since I was closest to the window, I tried to open the latch, but I didn't understand how it worked and just kept struggling with it. All of a sudden, I felt as though I were levitating. I had to look down at my feet to make sure I was still on the ground. I was definitely standing there, but I felt such ecstatic feelings of presence,

joy, love, and power. All the blood seemed to flow out of my head.

The sister could only see me from behind. She asked, "What's wrong? Open the window. The butterfly wants out! The butterfly wants out!" I finally got the window open, and the butterfly flew away. I turned around and the others said my face was white. "What just happened?" I asked, even though I knew I had just been visited. I don't know how else to say it: Thérèse was there.

Before she died, Thérèse promised to spend her heaven doing good on earth. [1] Whether we believe in miracles of the saints or not, it seems like everybody who loves Thérèse has some miraculous story. She gets involved in our lives. I think she is present in millions of lives. There is something beautiful happening through this woman who said she wanted to perfect "the science of love." [2]

My own experience in her convent felt like an affirmation of what I truly believe and what has been a lot of my message. The little way is the spirituality of imperfection; we come to God not by doing it right, but by doing it wrong. It's not a matter of doing great things. Whenever we act in conscious love, this is the little way. And I think whatever we do in conscious union and love is prayer. So many of our Catholic saints are examples of heroic martyrdom; the message they give is, "If I am perfect, then God will love me." Because I was so programmed to think that way, I really needed to be released from that pursuit of perfection. Thank God both Thérèse and Francis of Assisi did that for me!

New Zealand Catholic women display 'pink shoes' to call for equality in the church

26 September 2022

by [Peter Kirkwood](#)



Women's shoes are seen during the "Pink Shoes into the Vatican" event Sept. 18 in Auckland, New Zealand. (Courtesy of Luc Powell)

Hundreds of Catholic women in New Zealand contributed to a provocative public art protest on Sept. 18 calling for equality of women in the church. The event took place in Auckland, the nation's largest city, and Wellington, its capital.

Called "Pink Shoes into the Vatican," the event consisted of an installation of hundreds of pairs of shoes donated by women around the country that were lined up on the streets leading up to both cities' cathedrals.

Tied to each pair of shoes was a label from its owner describing their contribution to or aspirations for the church. Many of these were heartfelt expressions of sadness and anger or pleas for change. A [promotional](#)

[video](#) released ahead of the event showed some of the shoes and their labels.



Women's shoes are seen during the "Pink Shoes into the Vatican" event Sept. 18 in Auckland, New Zealand. (Courtesy of Luc Powell)

The installation was supported and received by church officials in the two cities in markedly different ways. In Auckland there was a surprisingly positive response. In Wellington, things were a bit different.

The event was staged by a group called "[Be the Change, Catholic Church, Aotearoa](#)" (Aotearoa is the Maori name for New Zealand). It was formed in 2020, first in Auckland, then in Wellington, by Catholic women who are agitating for gender equality in the church.

Jo Ayers is a founding member of Be the Change in Auckland and one of the organizers of "Pink Shoes into the Vatican." She has master's degrees in anthropology and liturgy, the latter from University of Notre Dame in Indiana in the United States and teaches at theological colleges in New Zealand. She's unapologetic about the Pink Shoes event being deliberately provocative.

"I have a friend who talks about us being in a ministry of irritation," she told NCR. "We held the 'Pink Shoes' event to keep the topic

talked about. It's to make people aware there are members of the church, there are women who recognize the church really needs change and have already done some work on what those changes might be."

"We're hoping to reach people in the church, but I'm also interested in people who are on the margins or who've left the church," she said. "There's lots of Catholic women who've said they've had enough and quit."

The inspiration for the name of Sunday's installation was the "[Pink Smoke Over the Vatican](#)" protest held in Rome during the 2013 conclave that elected Pope Francis. It was orchestrated by the U.S. group [Women's Ordination Conference](#). During the conclave, participants in that event lit pink smoke flares to rival the white smoke that would signal the election of a new pope.



Fr. Chris Denham, dean of St. Patrick's Cathedral in Auckland, greets participants at the "Pink Shoes into the Vatican" event in that city on Sept. 18 (Courtesy of Luc Powell)

"Pink Shoes into the Vatican" was timed to be held the day before Women's Suffrage

Day in New Zealand. Women were granted the right to vote there on Sept. 19, 1893, making it the first country where women could vote in parliamentary elections.

In Auckland, Jo Ayers and other organizers laid out the shoes along the streets leading from the Suffrage Memorial to St Patrick's Cathedral. There they received from Fr. Chris Denham, the cathedral's dean, a letter of support from Bishop Stephen Lowe, who was away from the diocese. Ayers described the atmosphere as festive and not confrontational.

"It was positive, it wasn't acrimonious or aggressive," said Ayers. "Onlookers were very interested and a lot of people asked us about it. It's women's suffrage anniversary and we're saying through our event that even though women can run New Zealand — we've had women as prime minister, governor general, and chief justice — in the church we're second class and we're saying to the church it's time for change."

In Wellington, the placement of shoes started at Parliament House and finished at Sacred Heart Cathedral just a few blocks away. Cecily McNeill is founder of Be the Change in Wellington and one of the organizers of the "Pink Shoes" event there. She said she's been active in the church all her life, leading church music and being involved in social justice groups. She has a theology degree and for nine years was editor of the archdiocesan newspaper. She says that religious and clergy were notably absent from the "Pink Shoes" event except for one priest who was sympathetic.

"There was only one priest there, an elderly Marist, and he made a couple of points," McNeill told NCR. She said the priest compared the treatment of women in the church to the treatment of slaves.



Cecily McNeill, founder of the "Be the Change" in Wellington, during the event in that city on Sept. 18 (Courtesy of John Murphy, CathNews New Zealand)

"You go into any church before Mass and there are lots of women preparing for the liturgy or doing the music, and you don't see many men doing that sort of stuff," said McNeill. "And of course not many women get paid for that sort of work."

McNeill said that Wellington Cardinal John Dew initially had been supportive of the "Pink Shoes" event. But when it came close to the time of staging it he was away from the archdiocese and the women had to work with Coadjutor Archbishop Paul Martin. When they asked Martin if they could advertise the event through Wellington parishes he refused, McNeill said.

In an email that McNeill shared with NCR, Martin said the event had "more of a focus of making a statement and furthering a particular point of view, rather than for building up of the Church community."

NCR approached Martin for further explanation of why he refused the women's request and he replied saying that apart from his letter to McNeill, he had "no further comment to make regarding this."

In contrast, Lowe in Auckland apologized in his letter to "Pink Shoes" organizers for not being able to join their event. He called it a "*hikoi*," a Maori word indicating a "journey with a purpose."

Lowe also referenced the New Testament's account that Mary Magdalene was the first person to see the risen Jesus, and when she announced this to the disciples they didn't believe her.

"Perhaps this is a poignant reminder that the Twelve and their successors can get it very wrong," wrote Lowe. "May we have the courage not to get stuck in the structures that are not necessarily of God."

Lowe also thanked the organizers for a pair of women's shoes they'd given him at an earlier meeting.

"They remain in my office and are certainly a talking point," he said. "They also remind me that I too need to be the change. Together may we be docile to the movement of the Holy Spirit who is active in all the people of God as She invites the Church ever more forth on the way to the Kingdom of God."

Ayers said she was delighted at Lowe's response, and pleasantly surprised by his use of the female pronoun "She" for the Holy Spirit.



Jo Ayers, founding member of "Be the Change" in Auckland, speaking during the event in that city on Sept. 18 (Courtesy of Luc Powell)

"He's making a big theological statement there, he's on board," said Ayers. "You can't gender God. God is male and female. We attempt to describe God but we can't. And using the female pronoun jolts people into recognizing that our traditional view of God as an old man, or young man, or whatever, we've just got to push out from that."

Ayers said she was greatly encouraged by the "Pink Shoes" event and Lowe's support. She said she plans to invite the bishop to attend her Sunday worship community.

In Wellington, McNeill is not so sanguine about changes for women in the church.

"It's almost 60 years since Vatican II started and not much has changed," she said. "In fact I think we've gone backwards. There's a lot that came through in Vatican II but that's been lost. I have hope because it would be beyond me as a Christian not to have hope, but I'm not terribly optimistic."



Peter Kirwood

Peter Kirwood is a freelance journalist specializing in coverage of religion based in Sydney. He has a master's degree in theology and worked for 23 years in the Religion Unit of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

Of candidates and climate: The unspoken forces behind the migrants in Martha's Vineyard

26 September 2022

by [Phyllis Zagano](#),
[Religion News Service](#)



Immigrants gather with their belongings outside St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, Sept. 14, in Edgartown, Massachusetts, on Martha's Vineyard. (Vineyard Gazette via AP/Ray Ewing)

The most notable complainers about the immigration crisis are men running for office: Texas Gov. Greg Abbott and Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis. They all complain about the situation at the border. They complain about U.S. policy. They complain about human beings trying to find space on the planet.

They are not kind in their words or deeds.

Texas taxpayers are bankrolling Abbott's \$12 million migrant busing plan, in which, since April, Texas has sent some 1,800 migrants to Washington, 9,000 to New York and 300 to Chicago. Abbott's New York contract reportedly includes a nondisclosure agreement, so that officials in the destination cities have no way of finding out who is coming or when.

DeSantis, in a move of crass one-upmanship, flew 48 migrants from Texas via Florida to surprise Martha's Vineyard, the 87-square-mile resort island south of Cape Cod, Massachusetts. In his effort to be Trump 2.0, DeSantis earned the former president's vitriol for diverting the news cycle away from him and for "stealing" his idea.

Not to be outdone, Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey, who is term-limited and will leave office next year, has bused approximately 1,800 migrants to Washington since May, but at least he lets officials know the schedule.

All of them — Abbott, Ducey, DeSantis and their minions — are trafficking human beings. These migrants are people, not numbers, who have risked everything for a chance at a better life, for a chance at survival.

Yes, we all know about the illegal border crossings, about the persons who have come

to the U.S. and disappeared into crowded slums and backwater towns. We know as well about the people who overstayed their visas. And we know all about fentanyl, rape, robbery and gang violence seeping out of silent, illegal communities to the larger population.

But the people bused to New York and Chicago and Washington, and who were, incredibly enough, flown to Martha's Vineyard, have paperwork. They are victims of political or economic dysfunction and oppression in their own countries. They do not necessarily want to be in the United States; they want to be someplace they can live. They want to eat. They want to work. They want to have dignified lives for themselves and for their children.

They did not cause their personal tragedies.

In large part, the industrialized world did.



Nia Riningsih, one of few residents who stayed behind after most of her neighbors left due to the rising sea levels that inundated their neighborhood on the northern coast of Java Island, checks salted fish she dries as her daughter Safira plays at their house in Mondoliko village, Central Java, Indonesia, Nov. 7, 2021. (AP/Dita Alangkara)

That would be, in order: the United States, China, Russia, Germany, the United Kingdom, Japan and India, and to a lesser

degree France, Canada, Ukraine, Poland, Italy, South Africa and Mexico.

From 1750 through 2020, greenhouse gas emissions totaled 1.7 trillion tons from the developed world's use of fossil fuels for heating and transportation and from industrial chemical reactions.

All of that causes global warming, and global warming changes the weather. Lakes and streams disappear, and with them forests and vegetation. Livestock, let alone people, cannot survive in burgeoning deserts. Either they move or they die.

Too often, the forests that survive drought are felled by legal or illegal clear-cutting. The people living within them sometimes escape the browbeaters sent by big business to intimidate them from the land, or the independent murderous thugs harvesting ancient woods. These escapees crowd the cities and find no work. They are the migrants.

Everyone talks about global warming, but few connect it to the economic upheaval and political dangers faced by the poor of the world.

Everyone talks about global warming, but few connect it to the economic upheaval and political dangers faced by the poor of the world.

Yes, world powers joined together in Paris to agree that climate change is real and dangerous. Back in the United States, JPMorgan Chase led the world in funding the fossil fuel industry, to the tune of \$196 billion. And so, along with its confreres in business and industry, Chase helped warm the planet more than 1 degree Celsius. The Arctic is melting, violent weather is increasing, and a billion animals burned in Australian fires last year.

Yet all the talk does nothing to stop the destruction of the planet and, eventually, its people. There soon will be no more borders to cross to relative security.

The migrants from Central and South America to the United States are in large part coming from situations created by American greed and carelessness.

Why wouldn't they head north?

More importantly, why would the United States not accept them?



[Phyllis Zagano](#)

Phyllis Zagano is senior research associate-in-residence and adjunct professor of religion at Hofstra University, in Hempstead, New York. Her most recent book is [Women: Icons of Christ](#).

Head of Vatican Synod office: 'Let us trust in our people'

27 September 2022

by [Christopher White](#)

[Vatican](#)



Maltese Cardinal Mario Grech, secretary-general of the Synod of Bishops, is pictured at the Vatican in a 2019 file photo. (CNS/IPA/Sipa USA via Reuters)

ROME — The head of the Vatican's synod office says that when it comes to hot-button issues such as the reception of Communion for divorced and remarried Catholics and the blessing of same-sex couples, discussion cannot be limited to doctrinal concerns, but must also include pastoral considerations.

"These issues are not to be understood simply in terms of doctrine, but in terms of God's ongoing encounter with human beings," said Maltese Cardinal Mario Grech, secretary-general of the Synod of Bishops.

"What has the church to fear if these two groups within the faithful are given the opportunity to express their intimate sense of spiritual realities which they experience?" he asked. "Might this be an opportunity for the church to listen to the Holy Spirit speaking through them also?"

Grech's remarks came during a virtual address on Sept. 22 to the [annual summit](#) of Leadership Roundtable, an organization that promotes a model of co-responsibility between ordained and lay people as a best practice for church governance.

In October 2021, Pope Francis [launched](#) a newly revamped global synod process, beginning with an unprecedented listening phase, which over the course of two years is

meant to provide opportunities for Catholics and all people of goodwill to more fully participate in church life.

"The whole people of God must be involved in the synod," Grech told the summit, which was held in Washington D.C.

The Vatican body named the "Synod of Bishops" has begun to shift its branding to "the Synod," meant to signal that both the office and the process is open to everyone.

"The Synod has been transformed into a listening process," he continued. "The Synod does not exist separately from the rest of the faithful."

As the cardinal offered his virtual address, a group of more than 24 theologians and pastoral leaders from six continents were meeting in Frascati, Italy, to take the more than 100 national synod reports and to synthesize them for the next stage of the global synod, which takes place at the continental level over the next year, before an October 2023 gathering in Rome.

Grech noted that he had twice read the report from the United States that was [released](#) on Sept. 19, which included the involvement of some 700,000 individuals. He remarked that the involvement was "unexpectedly high," even though it represents just over 1% of the country's 66.8 million Catholics.

The cardinal, who has spent much of the last year [addressing](#) synodal gatherings around the globe, said that listening is the "founding act of the synod" and a "true pastoral conversion of the church."

'What has the church to fear if these two groups within the faithful are given the opportunity to express their intimate sense of spiritual realities which they experience?'
—Cardinal Mario Grech

He said that he often reminds bishops that while they are responsible, that "there is no flock without a shepherd" and "there is no shepherd without a flock."
"Bishops have a duty to listen to their people," he continued, adding that all the baptized are "empowered by the sacraments of baptism and confirmation."

"Let us trust in our people," he said. "Let us trust that the Holy Spirit acts in and with our people. And this Spirit is not merely a property of the ecclesial hierarchy."

While the cardinal acknowledged that there are some bishops and others who have "serious concerns" about where the synodal process will lead the church, he said that he hopes it will reveal that there is "legitimate" diversity in church life, but that should not lead to rupture among believers.

"The ties which draw the faithful together are stronger than those which separate them," he said. "Let them take unity in what is necessary, freedom in what is doubtful and charity in everything."

Whether it be LGBTQ Catholics or those who favor the Latin Mass, Grech said that "everybody should be listened to" and "nobody is excluded."

"I hope the synodal process," he concluded, "will provide an experience that will inaugurate a much-needed spiritual, systematic and missionary renovation for the whole church."



Christopher White

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Pope Francis appoints Vatican's new culture, education chief

27 September 2022

by [Christopher White](#)

Vatican



Pope Francis talks with Cardinal José Tolentino Calaca de Mendonça, Vatican archivist and librarian, during a ceremony in the Vatican Library Nov. 5, 2021. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

ROME — Pope Francis on Sept. 26 named Portuguese Cardinal José Tolentino de Mendonça to head the newly formed Dicastery for Culture and Education. His nomination is the first major appointment since the Vatican's [new constitution](#) took effect in June, likely setting into motion a

series of forthcoming leadership changes in the Vatican's central bureaucracy.

Tolentino, 56, will lead the recently established office, formed as the result of a merger between the Pontifical Council for Culture and the Congregation for Catholic Education. He succeeds Italian Cardinals Gianfranco Ravasi, 79, who has led the Vatican's culture office since 2007; and Giuseppe Versaldi, 79, who has led the Vatican's education office since 2015.

The Portuguese cardinal, who is both a poet and theologian, had been the head of the Vatican Library since 2018. He was made a cardinal by Francis in 2019.

Previously, he served as the first director of the National Secretariat of the Pastoral Care of Culture from 2004 to 2014, a program of the Portuguese Catholic bishops' conference. From 2011 to 2018, Tolentino was a consultant to the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Culture, and in February 2020, he became a full member.

In July, he was also [named](#) as a member of the Dicastery for Bishops, the Vatican office tasked with advising the pontiff on which Catholic priests to appoint as bishops across the world.

Italian Msgr. Giovanni Cesare Pagazzi, a professor at the John Paul II Pontifical Theological Institute for Marriage and Family Sciences in Rome, will serve as his deputy. Pagazzi, 57, is also consultant to the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith.

In June 2019, the Vatican's education office [released](#) a controversial document during Pride month that blasted modern gender theory, claiming that it seeks to "annihilate the concept of 'nature'" and questioned the intentions of those who identify as intersex and transgender.

Archbishop Angelo Vincenzo Zani, who previously served as secretary of the Congregation for Education, will succeed Tolentino as head of the Vatican archives and library.

Zani, a 72-year-old Italian prelate, has also served in the Roman curia as consultants to the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith and the Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life.

Several other major Vatican [departments](#) are led by individuals over the traditional retirement age of 75 and have served past their 5-year mandates, including Spanish Cardinal Luis Ladaria of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith and Canadian Cardinal Marc Ouellet of the Dicastery for Bishops.

Francis met with both Ladaria and Ouellet on Sept. 26, but no personnel changes have yet been announced for their respective offices.



Christopher White

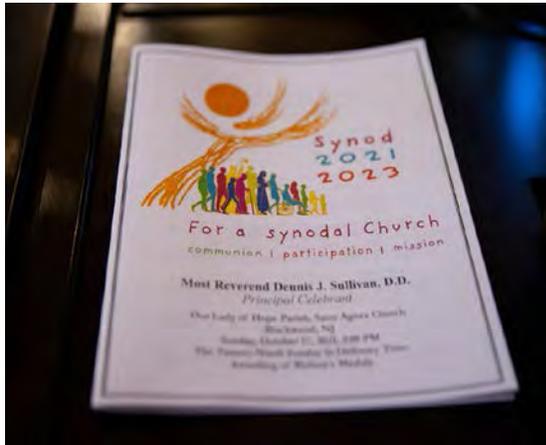
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National synodal report raises question: 'Now what?'

28 September 2022

by [Michael Sean Winters](#)

Vatican



A program for a Mass opening the synod process in the Diocese of Camden, New Jersey, is seen at St. Agnes Church of Our Lady of Hope Parish Oct. 17, 2021, in Blackwood. Over several months reflections were collected from the faithful in parishes across the diocese and put before diocesan teams and deaneries as part of the churchwide preparation process for the 2023 world Synod of Bishops on synodality. (CNS/Catholic Star Herald/Dave Hernandez)

The U.S. bishops' conference issued its "[National Synthesis of the People of God in the United States of America for the Diocesan Phase of the 2021-2023 Synod.](#)"

The document is exceedingly well done, bringing together into one, concise and readable document the results of 22,000 reports from 30,000 listening sessions, in which the conference estimates some 700,000 people participated. Those numbers are staggering, a rebuke to the naysayers who viewed this process with suspicion.

Others have reported on the contents of the report, such as Dennis Sadowski for [Catholic News Service's fine summation](#). I do not suppose anyone was surprised about the issues that arose nationwide: the desire for a more welcoming church, concern about the role of women and the laity, a desire to overcome the divisiveness of society or at least keep it from infiltrating the church, etc. It was refreshing to see a document produced by the bishops' conference acknowledge "the perceived lack of unity among the bishops in the United States, and even of some individual bishops with the Holy Father, [is] a source of grave scandal."

So, kudos to everyone who participated in this enormous undertaking and to the staff at the bishops' conference who brought it all together.

Now what? That is the question that hangs over the text. Do we wait around until the synodal gathering in Rome in the autumn of 2023? Won't all this positive energy dissipate if we just stand around and watch the wallpaper age? In short, setting aside specific issues, how does the process continue?

The synthesis acknowledges the challenge. In the section on discernment, it states: "The next step for the U.S. Church is to give special attention to its parishes and dioceses, even as we continue participation in the continental and universal phases of the Synod, for that is where the People of God most concretely encounter the Spirit at work and where the first fruits of this discernment will be realized."

The text includes some hints about what such discernment will look like. It states, "Discernment attends to the voice of the Lord in the Church's liturgy, in the Church's teaching tradition, and in the voice of the lived experience of the People of God."

If I were planning a priest convocation for this winter, the topic would be: How do these three sources of inspiration interact? Teasing that out is not easy, especially at a time when, as Boston College Professor Cathleen Kaveny likes to [say](#), "Every guy with a copy of the catechism, an internet connection and an attitude thinks he's a theologian."

Quoting from the report of Region 9, which encompasses the provinces of Omaha and Kansas City, Kansas, about welcoming people without judging:

Whole groups of people feel that the teachings of the church preclude their sense of being welcome in the community. We need to examine the way in which certain teachings are presented, to demonstrate that we can be faithful to God without giving the impression that we are qualified to pass judgment on other people.

Not judging is a tricky thing to learn. The Lord Jesus never once asked for help with the task of judging others. We also believe we will all stand before him in judgment someday, and that those church teachings indicate in important ways what he expects of us. There is the tension.

The national synthesis highlights the goal of welcoming those who experience marginalization, and then observes that "Local communities report their experiences and hopes in this regard [becoming more welcoming], but also report the tension of not always knowing how to catechize and evangelize in a way that does not impede the welcome, and the desire to accompany with compassion the wounded in our Church and in wider society."

Here the drafters put their finger on another key tension that the synodal process must confront, one that is especially challenging

for the U.S. church: Apologetics may be necessary in other regards, but it is a most unhelpful posture for the synodal process. You can't really listen to others if you think you have the answers already, and that the only challenge is forcing understanding.

The next sentence points to a source of unity in this process: "The local churches live this tension in the hope that synodal reflection on the level of the Universal Church will offer more guidance and direction so as to foster communion, strengthen participation, and effectively engage in the mission of the Church."

Apologetics may be necessary in other regards, but it is a most unhelpful posture for the synodal process. You can't really listen to others if you think you have the answers already.

That is to say, when doctrine is involved, the local church is not at liberty to change what it wants, but must consult with the universal church. The whole judges the part, and the church of Rome plays a unique role in that universal judgment. Almost all Catholics understand this.

Two other items pertaining to the synod process itself warrant attention, both of which are contained in the section "Ongoing Formation for Mission."

First, the "mission" as it was reported is not so much evangelization as improving the quality of parish life, mindful that the culture, actually the Catholic subculture, no longer carries the life of faith as it did with previous generations. The focus is more *ad intra* than *ad extra*. Scholars, especially those engaged in pastoral theology, need to flesh out these challenges in greater detail but also attend to what seems to me a key insight Pope Francis has made throughout his pontificate: We go to the marginalized to

ameliorate their suffering but the effort will transform the church, will transform us, as well. Transformation is mentioned as one of the fruits of the synodal process, but it needs to be linked better with the *ad extra* call to evangelize, and to evangelize with our charity, proclaiming Christ's love in our deeds, using words when necessary.

N.B.: The section of "social mission" contains some additional insights here, but that subject warrants another column all its own.

Second, the synthesis quotes from the report of Region 5, the provinces of Louisville, Mobile, Alabama, and New Orleans, on the need for greater "formation for seminarians and those already ordained to better understand human and pastoral needs, cultural sensitivity and awareness, greater emphasis on social justice, sharing resources with the needy, balancing the adherence to the dogmatic teachings of the faith with care for the emotional needs of their parishioners, how to include the laity in decision-making and learning to speak the truth with empathy, creativity, and compassion." Here is a task bishops can start on tomorrow: better preparing the next generation of clergy who currently get their theology from internet sources rather than from Vatican II.

This national synthesis makes clear that synodality is not a silver bullet, but it is a different, and much needed, way of organizing and governing the church. As the Holy Father has said repeatedly, this is not parliamentarianism, it is about listening to the Holy Spirit spoken in the voice of the lived experience of the Christian faithful, and aligning that with the tradition of the church, the teachings of Sacred Scripture and the font of ecclesial life that is the Eucharist. This national synthesis report from the U.S. bishops' conference is a major

step forward, and those who prepared it deserve all the praise in the world.



[Michael Sean Winters](#)

Michael Sean Winters covers the nexus of religion and politics for NCR.

Theologian Gaillardetz warns against over-critique of church in 'last lecture'

28 September 2022

by [Joshua J. McElwee](#)

[Theology](#)



Richard Gaillardetz, Joseph Professor of Catholic Systematic Theology at Boston College, speaks during his "last lecture" on Sept. 23 in Boston College's Gasson Hall. (Courtesy of the Lonergan Institute at Boston College)

BOSTON — Theologians from across the U.S. gathered here Sept. 23-24 for a conference celebrating the legacy of [Richard Gaillardetz](#), one of the country's foremost experts on the exercise of authority in the Catholic Church, who is receiving treatment for pancreatic cancer.

Opening the event to a standing-room-only crowd of several hundred at Boston College's Gasson Hall on Sept. 23, Gaillardetz delivered what he termed his "last lecture" amid a six-week pause in his chemotherapy regimen.

In an hourlong discourse that was at turns autobiographical, theological and deeply personal, the theologian encouraged his colleagues to continue the work of "meaningful and lasting ecclesial reform" and to seek out a middle path between over-critiquing the Catholic Church as an institution and being over-trustful of its leaders, especially after the clergy sexual abuse scandals.

Gaillardetz, who is author, co-author or editor of about a dozen books that have become standard texts in theology courses, said he saw a need for theologians to adopt a "reflective equilibrium" between trusting the church and critiquing it.

"Our church today is paying the price for our failure to maintain a reflective equilibrium," said the theologian.

"We are becoming divided into two camps, those who embrace the tradition, whole cloth, as a reality that stands beyond critique, and those whose sweeping denunciations leave us only a few salvageable fragments of a largely failed tradition," he said.

'A church that cannot pray together is a church that has lost its very raison d'être.'
—Richard Gaillardetz

Gaillardetz particularly singled out what he termed a "pseudo-propheticism" among Catholics who mainly wish to critique the church.

"Today, in certain quarters, merely the whiff of being 'prophetic' curries ... untrammelled adulation," said the theologian. "Among more progressive, reformist Catholics, there is a temptation to applaud any and all criticisms leveled at church authorities, church structures or the received tradition, regardless of the objective merits of the critique itself."

Gaillardetz, who started his career in 1991 at the University of St. Thomas in Houston before moving to the University of Toledo in Ohio and then finally Boston College, is also a past president of the Catholic Theological Society of America, which is a major association of theologians across North America, and a former consultant to several subcommittees of the U.S. bishops' conference.

Theologians attending the Sept. 23-24 event praised Gaillardetz for his scholarship, his kindness as a colleague, and his impact on the students he has taught for some three decades.

Catherine Clifford, who co-authored the 2012 volume [Keys to the Council: Unlocking the Teaching of Vatican II](#) with Gaillardetz, called him "a generous mentor, teacher and colleague."

"I have always been impressed by Rick's work ethic and his commitment to collaborate with others to address pressing theological issues," Clifford, a professor of systematic and historical theology at St. Paul

University, a pontifical Catholic institution in Canada affiliated with the University of Ottawa, told NCR.



Richard Gaillardetz speaks with an attendee of the conference in his honor on Sept. 24 at Boston College. (Courtesy of the Lonergan Institute at Boston College)

"He is always looking ahead, seeking a constructive way forward, yet never losing touch with the well-trodden path of tradition," Clifford said.

"Rick has never shied away from an honest assessment of the immense challenges that face the church in our time," said Clifford. "Yet his incisive criticism is always tempered with Christian realism and the virtue of hope in merciful God."

Charity Sr. [Susan Wood](#), who served as president of the Catholic Theological Society of America immediately following Gaillardetz's term in that role, said his "most enduring legacy" would be his works on church authority, including his 1992 volume [Witnesses to the Faith](#), his 1997 volume [Teaching With Authority](#), and his 2018 volume [By What Authority?](#), an expanded version of a text originally published in 2003.

Wood, who gave a keynote at the Boston conference and is a professor of theology and academic dean at Regis College, the Jesuit School of Theology in Canada at the

University of Toronto, said Gaillardetz "does not dodge the hard questions such as the role of the *sensus fidelium* or how to navigate disagreement in the church."

Theologians in various posts across the U.S. spoke in similarly laudatory terms.

[Peter Phan](#), a theologian at Georgetown University, praised Gaillardetz's effort to travel to various parts of the world to experience the Catholic Church in various contexts, including for his work in the 2008 volume [Ecclesiology for a Global Church](#).

"What strikes me most is his willingness to learn about the church in its global dimensions," said Phan, also a former president of the Catholic Theological Society of America and winner of its John Courtney Murray award in 2010. "With this enlarged vision of global realities Dr. Gaillardetz has immensely enriched our contemporary ecclesiology."

Massimo Faggioli, a theologian at Villanova University, praised Gaillardetz particularly for his work in trying to address polarization in the U.S. church and in training young theologians.

"As a teacher, he trained a new generation of scholars that are now the ecclesiologists of our time, and at this time of ecclesial redefinition of terms, his contribution has given us young scholars with a *sensus ecclesiae* that will be crucial in the next few years," said Faggioli.

Gaillardetz's mentorship of his students was a major theme of the Sept. 23-24 conference. Three of his former pupils introduced the sessions on Sept. 24, and two of them, Elyse Raby of Santa Clara University and Jaisy Joseph of Villanova, also gave papers that day as part of a panel

discussion exploring aspects of Gaillardetz's work.

In her paper, Raby challenged Gaillardetz's stance on whether there might be an authentic vocation in the church for people who decide to be single, as in choosing not to get married or to join the priesthood or a religious order. Raby said she hoped that "the greatest way a student can honor a teacher is to expand beyond the teacher's thought."



Richard Gaillardetz seen in the foreground with his family among attendees at the "New Directions in Ecclesiology: The Contributions of Richard Gaillardetz" conference at Boston College on Sept. 24. (Courtesy of the Lonergan Institute at Boston College)

In remarks afterward, Gaillardetz said he was "delighted to be corrected" by his former student.

In his own "last lecture" on Sept. 23, Gaillardetz also warned the theologians present that polarization in wider society has been spreading into the church.

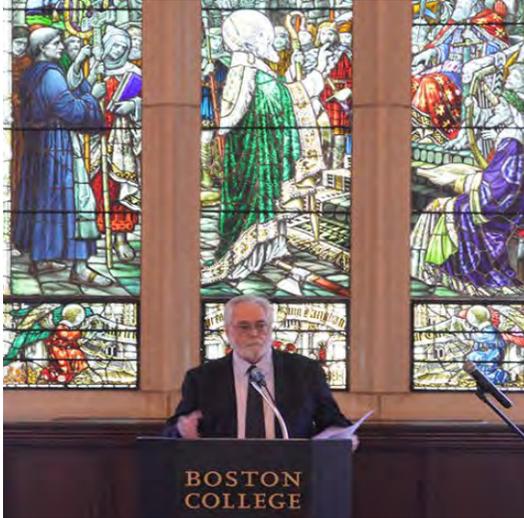
"This virus has infected our ecclesial and theological discourse ... and across the ideological spectrum," he said, using the example of how some Catholics have reacted to Pope Francis' decision to [impose further restrictions](#) on the pre-Vatican II Latin Mass.

"In the post-conciliar church, the liturgy has borne much of the burden of ecclesial polarization and with devastating consequences," he said. "A church that cannot pray together is a church that has lost its very *raison d'être*."

Referencing Francis' frequent exhortations for Catholics to create a "culture of encounter," Gaillardetz said the solution to the polarization "must lie in a commitment to sustained dialogical processes and the cultivation of habits, practices and dispositions that can transform our affective attachments and tribal tendencies, and encourage us to engage with love and care those with whom we disagree."

Gaillardetz only mentioned his cancer diagnosis toward the end of his talk, saying it had led him to "contend rather intensely with the finitude, brokenness and suffering that is our lot as God's creatures."

"I must confess to having, more than once, hurled my complaints heavenward against the seeming injustice of it all," he said. "But I have learned, oh so slowly, that a time often comes when our laments and protests, justifiable in their own right, must yield to a more contemplative posture. There we are invited into the gracious mystery of divine providence in which, even as we realize that the complete eradication of suffering and injustice eludes us, God's grace still abounds."



Dennis Doyle speaks at Boston College Sept. 24. (Courtesy of the Lonergan Institute at Boston College)

The presenters on Sept. 24 mainly shied away from mentioning Gaillardetz's health. But Dennis Doyle, who gave a comprehensive overview of Gaillardetz's decades of work, nodded toward it at the end of his presentation.

Doyle, a theologian who has retired from the University of Dayton, said he was struck by an account in Gaillardetz's 2002 book [*A Daring Promise: A Spirituality of Christian Marriage*](#). Doyle recounted Gaillardetz's summary of a conversation with a friend in her 30s named Mary, who was receiving cancer treatment.

At the time, Mary told Gaillardetz that she had struggled with her faith but "through all these times of doubt, there is one thing I have never questioned ... there can be no rising without dying."

Said Doyle: "Mary did not fear her approaching death, because she had embraced death ... as a raw fact of her existence."

"Mary taught Rick," said Doyle. "Rick teaches us. And we should listen, and we should build on his legacy."



[Joshua J. McElwee](#)

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Eucharistic revival can say something meaningful, if it's not political

29 September 2022

by [Daryl Grigsby](#)

[Vatican](#)



Altar bread is seen on patens before Mass Oct. 8, 2021, at the Renasant Convention Center in Memphis, Tennessee, during the diocesan eucharistic congress. (CNS/Karen Pulfer Focht)

The U.S. bishops have initiated a National Eucharistic Revival, beginning with the 2022 feast of Corpus Christi and concluding on the 2025 feast of Pentecost. A key

moment in the revival is a scheduled National Eucharistic Congress for July 2024 in Indianapolis.

A rededication of the Eucharist is crucial, for anything that is repeated weekly, or daily for some, can become rote with an accompanying loss of meaning.

The Eucharist, the source and summit of Catholic spiritual life, is the most meaningful sacrament of the church. Before I became Catholic, I sang in the gospel choir in a Catholic church. Curious about why anyone would want to be Catholic, I asked one of my fellow baritone singers, "Why are you Catholic?" His answer, confusing then but clearer now, was, "It's all about the Eucharist."

Two years later I became Catholic, and thus began my still expanding grasp of the Eucharist. Twenty-four years after my confirmation, I relate to St. Teresa of Ávila's sentiment written 500 years ago: "Oh wealth of the poor, how wonderful can you sustain souls, revealing your great riches to them gradually and not permitting you to see them all at once! Since the time of that great vision, I have never seen such great majesty hidden in a thing so small as the host, without marveling at your great wisdom." Each reception of the Eucharist expands my vision, heart and vocation.

I therefore applaud the bishops' eucharistic revival. Yet, I am suspicious of the bishops' intent. These are many of the same people, after supporting a president (Donald Trump) whose racism and misogyny was appalling, immediately pounced on a Catholic president (Joe Biden) with [threats of a eucharistic ban](#). In addition, recently San Francisco Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone [ordered](#) that House Speaker Nancy Pelosi be forbidden from receiving the Eucharist. [Cordileone's letter](#) notes:

I am hereby notifying you that you are not to present yourself for Holy Communion and, should you do so, you are not to be admitted to Holy Communion, until such time as you publicly repudiate your advocacy for the legitimacy of abortion and confess and receive absolution of this grave sin in the sacrament of Penance.

I am Catholic, I do not "believe" in abortion, but I believe we should work to construct a society where abortions are unnecessary, not illegal. I also believe our society's approach toward abortion reflects a male-centric lack of compassion for women. I believe that as one person has said to me, "If men got pregnant, abortions would be as accessible as an ATM." It is sobering that the [states that have banned or are most likely to ban abortion are also those with the flimsiest safety net for women and children](#). Our inordinate focus on making abortions illegal clouds our vision of the broader social and economic conditions that diminish life for women and children.

The bishops' focus on abortion confirms the perspective that issues related to sex and gender are the only sins of consequence. Divorce? No Eucharist. Abortion? No Eucharist. Yet, on racism, white supremacy, white nationalism, homophobia, anti-immigration, support for capital punishment, support for mass incarceration, support for policies that create poverty while 1% are enriched, support for assault weapon proliferation, support for unjustified invasions, support for a president whose racism and lies created incalculable harm — the bishops seem to say, "Happy are those called to the supper of the Lamb."

Fortunately, misappropriations of the Eucharist cannot dilute its power. This liturgical year I attended an Advent retreat led by Fr. Peter Bosque, a retired priest of the Diocese of San Diego. He reminded us

that, as St. Augustine said, in the Eucharist we are placing ourselves on the altar. Augustine's sentiment echoes that of Romans 12:1-2: "I appeal to you therefore, my brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice." Following this prayer is a discussion of how our varied gifts come together as we become, the body of Christ. Thus, "your bodies" is not about individuals, but the collective.

Bosque also noted that "Mass is not a duty done but a love embraced." He further noted the Liturgy of the Eucharist is not about what we receive, but what we become. He emphasized that the Eucharist reaffirms, strengthens, illuminates and expresses the fact that we become, and already are, the body of Christ.



In this 2002 file photo, a woman receives Communion during a special Mass marking the first Eucharistic Congress of the Knights of Columbus at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington. On June 16, 2022, the feast of Corpus Christi, the U.S. bishops' three-year eucharistic revival begins. It culminates with a eucharistic congress in 2024 in Indianapolis. (CNS photo by Andy Carruthers, Catholic Standard)

The Eucharist is not magic. The Eucharist is our realization that Christ was broken for our wholeness. And the "our" is not for individual benefit, but that we come together with our brothers and sisters to form and live as the body of Christ on earth. Thus, **like**

Christ, we are broken and given for the life of the world. The Eucharistic Prayer book "Bread of Life" contains the following by Oblate Fr. Ron Rolheiser: "More so than the bread and wine, we, the people, are meant to be changed, to be transubstantiated. The Eucharist, as sacrifice, asks us to become the bread of brokenness and the chalice of vulnerability."

Further, Eucharistic Prayer 4 petitions God "to make of us an eternal offering to you ... that we might live no longer for ourselves ... but for him ... to complete his work on earth." This prayer illuminates what happens in the Eucharist. We are the offering, we live as Him, we together complete his work on earth. That work is not judgement, division or exclusion, but love, mercy and justice. Bosque reminded us that the Mass is not for us, "but for the world, and that it is food in our journey to become love."

I am hoping that our revival of the Eucharist is about us becoming the body of Christ, with all the accompanying beautiful implications. The Eucharist is not for the worthy, special, virtuous or qualified, nor is it a tool to affirm or deny a narrow political agenda. It is much more, it is our profound encounter with the incomprehensible love of God, an encounter that calls us to love in return. This love is not abstract, for it is specific enough to address the poor and excluded.

The Eucharist is not for the worthy, special, virtuous or qualified, nor is it a tool to affirm or deny a narrow political agenda. It is much more, it is our profound encounter with the incomprehensible love of God, an encounter that calls us to love in return.

I refer to Goffredo Boselli's [*The Spiritual Meaning of the Liturgy: School of Prayer, Source of Life*](#), which includes the chapter "Liturgy and Love for the Poor."

In a detailed exposition of 1 Corinthians 11, Boselli explains that the divisions of the church at Corinth were because the wealthy gathered for sumptuous meals while the poor were excluded and went hungry. Thus, what scandalized the Eucharist in the church at Corinth was how the poor were cast aside. Boselli writes, "What was true of the community at Corinth is also true of Christian communities of today; not to share with one's poorest neighbors 'show[s] contempt for the church of God' (1 Cor 11:22)."

He goes on to say, "In a culture marked by individualism, competition, affirmation of oneself at all costs even at the expense of others and against others, it is difficult to be church, to truly be a community. Only from the Eucharist, from the prophetic gesture of the breaking of the bread, can the Christian communities of the West renew their awareness that the church cannot be the body of Christ where Christians fail to turn away from egoism and refuse to share their goods with the poor."

Boselli also notes how the Didache, the ancient document also known as the "Teaching of the Twelve Apostles," helps us understand their views of the Eucharist. In the Didache, the word for Eucharist was *klasma*, or, simply, "broken." Imagine if we substituted Eucharist for "broken"? Jesus "broken" that we might live, we "broken" that others might live, we "broken" to become part of the one body of Christ.

The Eucharist has riches that can never be exhausted. It empowers an individual so molded into Christ that, "not I live, but Christ lives in me." It also recreates a diverse, fragmented, flawed community of believers into a loving justice-building body of Christ in the world.

Jesus said two things about the future in the Gospel of John: First, we will do greater works than he did; and second, that he has many more things to tell us. The Eucharist fulfills those promises. I am hopeful the eucharistic revival will be an opportunity to grasp and live into the love and community made possible by our sharing this sacred mystery.



Daryl Grigsby

Daryl Grigsby is the author of [*In Their Footsteps: Inspirational Reflections on Black History for Every Day of the Year*](#), and is currently a presenter in the Jesuit School of Theology Sabbatical Renewal Program. He is also president of the board of directors of Color Me Human in Nevada County, and a member of the board of directors of Leadership Foundations.

King Charles should continue to speak up about global warming

29 September 2022

by [Thomas Reese](#),
[Religion News Service](#)

[Leaders](#)



Britain's then-Prince Charles delivers a speech at the opening ceremony of the U.N. climate summit COP26 in Glasgow, Scotland, Nov. 1, 2021. (Yves Herman/Pool via AP)

Everyone agrees that [Queen Elizabeth II](#) is a hard act to follow. As a constitutional monarch who united her kingdom without ever making a political statement, let alone a partisan one, she held herself above politics as a symbol of the best of British values and character.

King Charles III takes up the crown as an old man who has spoken out on issues from urban architecture to the environment and global warming. His personal life, too, carries with it some heavy baggage: Some will never forgive him for his treatment of Princess Diana.

Given that history, he should resist those advisers who want to force him into his mother's mold. He is not his mother and never will be. He must find his own path. He should acknowledge his failings and build on his strengths.

One of his strengths is the aforementioned commitment to the environment. Long before it was fashionable, Charles denounced plastic pollution in the oceans. He was also ahead of other world leaders in warning about global warming.

As far back as 1970, Charles warned of "the horrifying effects of pollution in all its cancerous forms" and pointed to the

problem of "indestructible plastic containers." He took up the challenge of climate change long before others.

"We're busily wrecking the chances for future generations at a rapid rate," he said, "by not recognizing the damage we're doing to the natural environment, bearing in mind that this is the only planet that we know has any life on it."

Unlike many, he takes seriously what scientists are saying about the effects of climate change. "It is baffling," he said, "that in our modern world we have such blind trust in science and technology that we all accept what science tells us about everything — until, that is, it comes to climate science."

Early on, critics made fun of him for these concerns, but he was never afraid to speak hard truths. "There is very little we can do now to stop the ice from disappearing from the North Pole in the summer," he said. "And we probably cannot prevent the melting of the permafrost and the resulting release of methane. In addition, I fear that we may be too late to help the oceans maintain their ability to absorb carbon dioxide."

At last year's [COP26 meeting](#) in Scotland, he warned, "The scale and scope of the threat we face call for a global-systems-level solution based on radically transforming our current fossil fuel-based economy to one that is genuinely renewable and sustainable."

He urged countries "to come together to create the environment that enables every sector of industry to take the action required. We know this will take trillions, not billions of dollars."

For most of her reign, Queen Elizabeth would never have uttered these words,

which would have appeared too political. But even she at COP26 spoke forcefully, saying that "the time for words has now moved to the time for action." Although she did not speak until decades after her son, her words at COP26 may have given a green light to Charles continuing his advocacy on global warming. Let's hope.

It's true that, as king, Charles will have to be careful what he says. His safest strategy is to be a spokesperson for science and the need for action, and leave others to decide on specific policies. But he can act as a convener of scientists and other experts to develop solutions to global warming.

In these efforts, he would find a willing ally in Pope Francis and other religious leaders who recognize global warming as the moral issue of the 21st century. Like the king, faith leaders are not in a position to make political choices about what should be done, but they have the right, and the obligation, to demand action now before it is too late.



Thomas Reese

Jesuit Fr. Thomas Reese's column for Religion News Service, "Signs of the Times," appears regularly at National Catholic Reporter.

Synod advisers meet outside Rome to consider 'time for change' in Catholic Church

30 September 2022

by [Christopher White](#)

[Vatican](#)



Women who attended the gathering in Frascati outside of Rome are pictured in a Vatican synod video. From left: Sr. Anne-Béatrice Faye; Susan Pascoe; Philomena Njeri Mwaura; Maike Sieben; Sr. Gill Goulding, and Sr. Brigit Weiler. (NCR screenshot/YouTube/Synod-va)

ROME — During spring of 1965, several dozen bishops and theologians spent six days in a religious house 20 miles southeast of Rome hammering out a draft of what would eventually become [Ad Gentes](#), the Second Vatican Council's decree on missionary work and evangelization.

The gathering included theological notables such as Archbishop Fulton Sheen, Dominican Fr. Yves Congar and then-Fr. Joseph Ratzinger. The future Pope Benedict XVI [later recalled](#) those days spent on Lake

Nemi as one of his "fondest" memories from Vatican II.

Less than 10 miles away from where they gathered is the small town of Frascati, where nearly 60 years later — and in a similar fashion — some 30 theologians, pastoral workers and bishops have been gathering for the past week.

From Sept. 22-Oct. 2, the group has hunkered down on the grounds of another retreat center to draft the working document of the continental phase of Pope Francis' [revamped](#) global synod process, which is taking the synodal process that Pope Paul VI created at the end of the Council and attempting to expand participation beyond the clergy, in order to listen to all of the church's members.

"There is a tremendous sense of common purpose among us," said Susan Pascoe, who has held a number of senior roles in both the Australian government and church. "Each of us feels an enormous responsibility to faithfully draw out what the people of God submitted."

Pascoe spoke with NCR via phone from Frascati, where she described how representatives from six continents have worked to "authentically" synthesize the reports of 112 participating episcopal conferences from around the world to produce a new document that will guide the synod's next phase, which will take place through continental ecclesial assemblies in early 2023 ahead of a Rome meeting in October 2023.



Susan Pascoe, pictured in a Vatican synod video (NCR screenshot/YouTube/Synod-va)

Prior to the Frascati meeting, said Pascoe, each participant was given the synod reports from approximately 10-15 countries and encouraged to read them at least three times and then offer a country-by-country analysis and then, eventually, a synthesis of the themes that emerged.

"It really is kind of a census of the church in the world," said Pascoe.

Upon arrival in Frascati, the participants had different rounds of conversations in different small group configurations, based separately on continent of origin, ecclesial status (laity, religious or clergy), and gender.

According to Pascoe, this "slicing and dicing" created a rigorous process that allowed a series of small groups to carefully study the submissions and then present them to the full body of drafters.

Austen Ivereigh, who is among the drafters and is an organizer of "The Road to a Synodal Church" project in England, said the idea "is to keep giving you different perspectives on the same material."

He told NCR that the process reflected the global realities of the synodal process, where voices from Africa, Asia and Latin America are "just as strong" as testimonials

being brought forward from Europe and North America.

"These are voices that are all equally being heard," he said.

Ivereigh, who also co-authored the 2020 volume *Let Us Dream: The Path to a Better Future with Francis*, described another component of the report review phase — an "empty chair exercise" — which asked, "What voices are we missing here?"

"The assumption is everybody needs to be heard and listened to, and we need a church in which it is possible to do that," he said, including the "minority voices or edgier voices ... not just for the purpose of this exercise, but modeling a way of proceeding for the church of the future."

During the summit, Ivereigh said each day begins with a prayer service organized on rotation by members of different continents, followed by small group meetings and then plenary sessions, with an evening Mass before dinner.

On the opening night, Pascoe recalled, all the participants were asked to bring a symbol of what synodality means to them and place it at the altar.

She brought a copy of the "[Uluru Statement from the Heart](#)," a document drafted by Australian Aboriginal leaders in 2017, which sought to give greater voice and rights to the country's Indigenous population.

"We invite you to walk with us in a movement of the Australian people for a better future," the document states.

Asked Pascoe: "What better example of synodality is there than that?"

'The assumption is everybody needs to be heard and listened to, and we need a church in which it is possible to do that.'

—Austen Ivereigh

Both she and Ivereigh characterized the schedule as demanding, but also said the morning and afternoon tea breaks, an occasional gelato outing into town, and a side trip to visit the former papal palace in Castel Gandolfo provided a sense of fellowship that fueled their efforts.

"There's an enormous sense of common purpose," said Pascoe, who said that the group has been "drawing on a bond of trust" as it aims to complete the draft document.

While the drafters have been asked not to discuss the content of the forthcoming document, Mauricio López, who is the coordinator for the Conference of Latin American Bishops' Center for Networking and Action, told NCR that in synthesizing reports from around the globe "there is a very clear consistency in the recognition that this is a time for change."

"In this call for change, we can see that there needs to be a different dynamic in how the church listens to the people of God and how it allows itself to be transformed by listening to the people of God," he continued.

López, who was one of the organizers of the [2019 Synod of Bishops for the Pan-Amazon region](#), said that among the consistent concerns that have emerged in the reports are calls for greater attention to social justice and environmental justice, care for the suffering and the poor, the need for greater concern for the church in conflict areas and the role of women in the church.

In all of these findings, he said, there is evidence that it is time for "a different kind of leadership."

"Service has to be at the center of what it means to be the Catholic Church today," he said. "Otherwise, clericalism arises very strong, and the abuse of power, sexual abuse and authoritarianism emerges, because we lose sight of our actual core call, which is to serve."

'In this call for change, we can see that there needs to be a different dynamic in how the church listens to the people of God and how it allows itself to be transformed by listening to the people of God.'
—Mauricio López

Pascoe said that over the course of their work together, some participants have described their undertaking as a "gift" while others have talked about it being a "responsibility."

In the end, she said the consensus has emerged that it is both.

Ivereigh noted that the job of the synthesizers in Frascati is not to provide commentary on the reports and not to formulate theology from them, but rather to "re-present it."

"Our job is we're representing what we are hearing. We're not inventing anything new. We're representing it and we're giving it a platform," he said.

The final document for the continental phase of the synod is expected to be released in mid-October. Ivereigh said that it will not seek to resolve the various tensions of church life, but rather to contain them so that the report becomes a "vehicle for discernment."

"To me, the most sort of moving thing about this is, I think we do all feel that something very important is being born here," said

Ivereigh. "It's a new way of thinking about the church and the way it operates."

"We know that we're treading on sacred ground," he added, "because these reports really do seek to capture the deepest dreams and desires of the people of God."



Christopher White

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