

# The Cardinal

SUMMER 2026

MAGAZINE OF THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA

Toward

a more

perfect

union

24 ON CIVIL DIALOGUE

34 LAND OF POSSIBILITY: AMERICA AT 250



## FRONTISPIECE

The vestment on the opposite page belonged to Archbishop John Carroll (1736–1815), the first American bishop. Dating from the 1790s, it was likely a gift from a parishioner in the newly-formed Diocese of Baltimore. During the American Revolution, Carroll sympathized with the patriotic cause. He absorbed the Revolution's ideals, which informed his leadership of the new nation's Catholics when he was named the first bishop of Baltimore in 1789.



# True North

**In 1941, mere months before the bombing of Pearl Harbor**, our alumnus Venerable Fulton J. Sheen published *A Declaration of Dependence*. A professor here at Catholic University, Sheen was keenly aware of the crises facing our nation and the world at that time.

In his brief book, he set out to call his fellow Americans to rediscover the foundations of the freedoms they enjoyed.

“The State is not autonomous, but subject to a higher law. ... Democracy will rest on this divine foundation, or it will be laid to rest,” he wrote. “There are no rights of man without duties to God, and if we doubt it, then point to any Totalitarian system which denies the rights of man and I will show you they also deny duties to God. Democracy, the value of a person, liberty, and like, are fruits that grow on the tree of belief in God.”

With prophetic clarity, Sheen’s *Declaration* helps us see that the founders’ claims about the “self-evident” fact that we have all been created by God rests upon a tradition that preceded them by 18 centuries.

This role is one our Church has continuously played in the American drama. For more than

a quarter of a millennium, Catholic leaders like Archbishop Sheen have shone the light of faith on our American political and moral culture. They have reminded those in power that all our worldly projects will ultimately pass away — that our struggle to secure the common good in this “earthly city” is noble and necessary, but only insofar as it helps men and women on their way to the city of God.

In this vein, I commend to you highly the words of a more recent alumnus of our University: Archbishop William Lori of Baltimore. In this issue, you will find excerpts from his pastoral letter, “In Charity and Truth,” illuminated by commentary from members of our faculty (see the main feature, pp. 34–40).

Like Sheen before him, Archbishop Lori invites us to examine our consciences and take personal responsibility for the health of our nation by offering our own concrete acts of love for God and neighbor. I can think of no more fitting tribute to the country we love, and I hope you will join me and our University community as, by the grace of God, we help one another along the path toward true freedom. ♦

PETER KILPATRICK, PRESIDENT  
THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA

# Features



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## Land of Possibility: America at 250

A quarter millennium ago, Catholics in this new republic made a wager that faith and freedom could not only coexist but also enrich each other. That wager is still open, and how we answer it matters more than ever.

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## Politics for Good: A Vocation of Service

At its core, politics can be a vocation for service, and the University's politics department has a long history of advancing the mission: to serve the Church, the nation, and the world and to "give the Republic its best citizens."

COVER AND ILLUSTRATION BY JOCELYN O'LEARY

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“We want to empower students and give them the skills they need, so they don't feel like they have to be quiet ... but can engage positively with one another.” — *Marta Bystrowska, B.A. 2026*



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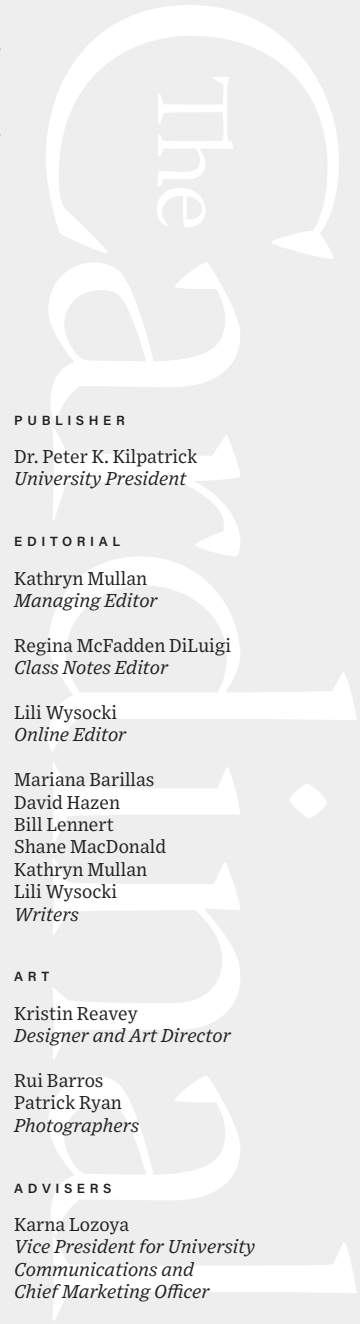
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*The Cardinal*, the magazine of The Catholic University of America, is distributed two times annually by the Division of University Communications. Correspondence for the magazine should be sent to the Division of University Communications, The Catholic University of America, 620 Michigan Ave., N.E., Washington, DC 20064. (ISSN 1086-7473)  
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— Jude and Mary Fran

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# CATHOLIC BY THE NUMBERS

## In Service to the World

This past spring break, Catholic University students and staff leaned into the mission of service in a big way. Giving back and traveling all over the world, the numbers are impressive!

113 people went on 6 service and mission trips, broken down by teams:

TUCSON

14

people supporting immersion experience work at the border

EL SALVADOR

23

people building houses for the community

LOS ANGELES

14

people evangelizing and doing service work

JAMAICA

22

people working with youth with disabilities

GUATEMALA

28

people evangelizing and working with youth

NEW YORK

12

people serving and visiting the elderly



ILLUSTRATION BY TOMMY PARKER

Briefings from the  
halls to the Mall and beyond

"TO BE INVITED TO USE THIS SPACE NOT JUST AS  
A VENUE, BUT AS A LABORATORY, IS A REAL HONOR."  
— TONYA OHNSTAD

P.12



LITERATURE

# Weaving a Life of Letters

BY TARYN OKUMA

**On a mild night in March**, Marian Mitchell Donahue, B.A. 2013, stood before a very enthusiastic crowd packed into People's Books, an independent bookstore in downtown Takoma Park, Md., to read from her debut novel. Both author and audience expressed their excitement that *Backstitch* had received a positive review in *The New York Times*, which praised it as a "fascinating and rewarding book," noting that "[t]he novel works like a puzzle, and Donahue handles this ambitious structure with deftness and confidence" (*NYT Book Review*, March 1, 2026).

The novel was nine years in the making. Donahue began work on her first draft in 2017 while living in College Park, before submitting it as her thesis in 2019 for her M.F.A. in Creative Writing and Literature at Stony Brook University. It was published by Galiot Press in March 2026. Yet, Donahue's path to writing began even earlier, and perhaps rather improbably, when she matriculated as a politics major at The Catholic University of America in fall 2009.

In the course of fulfilling her literature requirement, she took "ENG 232: The History

of British Literature II” in the spring of her freshman year. One day, she found herself sitting on a bench in the entryway of O’Boyle Hall with a copy of *The Once and Future King* on her lap, clearly absorbed in the book. Her English professor happened to walk by at that moment, stop, and ask her: “Are you sure you’re a politics major? You seem like an English major to me!”

Donahue began pursuing creative writing more seriously in her senior year, and in 2013, she graduated from Catholic University with a bachelor’s in English. After earning an MFA, she offered to meet virtually with the editorial board of *Vermilion* (Catholic University’s student-run magazine of literature and the arts), to share her experiences and offer advice to aspiring professional writers. Her continued relationship with the English Department offers inspiration for Cardinals who not only possess a deep love of great literature but also want to pursue careers as novelists and poets. The department has met this demand in kind with more creative writing courses like “Introduction to Creative Writing,” “Memoirs,” and “Literary Magazine Production.”

Donahue’s career path began with a strong foundation of reading great literature, which allowed her to develop her own writing voice and style. Reflecting on her time at Catholic University, she noted the importance of the department’s emphasis on literary history and canonical works.

“I didn’t realize when I was an undergrad just how much modern thought is built on the tradition of classical thought,” she said. “My familiarity with the Bible, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, and Shakespeare serves me over and over again in literature and in life.” ♦



ARCHITECTURE

# Designing More Than a Building

## Creating a Safe Space — and Hope

BY KATHRYN MULLAN

**She doesn’t know where to turn.** Expecting a child, without a steady roof overhead or a clear path forward, she needs more than a kind word. She needs a place, a safe place — with a room to sleep, medical staff to trust, and people who believe both her life and that of her baby are worth protecting and sustaining.

Architecture students and faculty at Catholic University have been developing designs to make such a place a reality.

### *A Vision for Visitation*

Professor Patricia Andrasik, AIA, IIDA, is director of the M.S. in Net Zero Design Program in the School of Architecture. Her “601: Adaptive Reuse Net Zero Studio” class, rooted in the core principles of Pope Francis’ *Laudato si*, pushes students to master net-zero energy consumption, carbon neutrality, and sustainable design — not as abstract metrics, but as acts of reverence for creation and for the people the built environment is meant to serve.

This past fall semester, Andrasik chose a novel project for the 601 studio: Have the graduate students collaborate with the Sisters of Life in Philadelphia on a vision to transform an existing school building owned by the Sisters into a first-of-its-kind sanctuary for women facing crisis pregnancies.

“The name and overall vision for the place, the Visitation Center, came from the Sisters of Life themselves, with the inspiration of Mary and Elizabeth in the New Testament, when they met and greeted one another and then stayed together for three months,” said Andrasik. “The Sisters wanted us to create a space for expecting mothers in the Philadelphia area — coming from a variety of backgrounds and availability of resources — to

feel safe, seen, and cared for on multiple levels.”

But the designs being drawn in Washington, D.C., may ultimately find their home in any city willing to say yes to this more profound kind of welcome.

“I was so pleased to see this course come together with a set of design studio projects that could have such an impact on an inner-city crisis pregnancy center,” said Andrasik. “The intersection of Catholic social teaching to care for those most in need, the protection of the unborn and their mothers alongside sustainable design, and service to the local communities really has the power to step pro-life initiatives around our nation to the next level of care.”

An essential part of the course required the students to pitch their concepts and designs to a jury of architects; the Sisters of Life; a priest from the Archdiocese of Philadelphia; a prominent pro-life physician, Dr. Marguerite Duane; and even President Peter Kilpatrick at the last stage.

## *Making it Real*

Dylan Robertson, B.S. Arch. 2024, and current master’s student, considered himself fortunate to take part in the 601 studio. Because he was already comfortable in Crough and knew many of his professors from his undergraduate studies, he felt ready for the challenge of this course.

“This 601 design studio is our penultimate architecture design studio before graduating with our masters,” said Robertson. “What I loved so much were the real-world ramifications; that was such an inspiring part of the project ... Bringing in the Sisters of Life who had a real architectural need, and then driving all the way up to Philadelphia as a class with Professor Andrasik, meeting everyone, measuring the whole building before we started the design portion — that was a great experience.”



Designing a structure for such a mission was something he had not tackled before. “I reflected on the Visitation story in the Bible and how Mary and Elizabeth have this kind of safe moment of fellowship,” he said. “That’s the origin of my approach — this concept of two paired buildings, the school building and the new addition, meeting together in the middle to form this moment of fellowship.”

The task was to transform an existing vacant school building into a new crisis pregnancy center with services for the local community. The project included bringing the old school building up to code and then attaching a new addition.

The proposed Visitation Center would offer an entire array of services for expectant mothers: medical facilities, temporary housing units for women and children, a playground, a chapel, a cafe, and much more. It even included sketches for a baby-hatch or baby-box, a practice from the Middle Ages that began in Italy and has been making a resurgence since 2000.

Beyond the structure of the buildings he proposed, Robertson brought the design concept into his interior renderings and how he wanted women and their families to feel inside the space. So instead of a food pantry for those who may need that support, he reinterpreted the space to be more of a moment of a “space for encounter.”

“I love that the design prompt was so socially focused and human-centered; that is the kind of work I want to do when I complete my master’s degree in 2027,” said Robertson.

## *Design for the Real World*

Plans that began here on campus — like this crisis pregnancy center — are only just starting to take shape, supporting a culture of life with the physical infrastructure it needs to protect every mother and her child. ♦



PHILANTHROPY

# Driving Growth, with Gratitude

BY KATHRYN MULLAN

**Generosity, it turns out, multiplies.** At The Catholic University of America's bi-annual Gratus celebration, hundreds of donors, faculty, staff, and students gathered to mark a record-breaking year of giving — and to recommit to the mission it makes possible.

In the spirit of *gratus*, “grateful,” the night was celebratory and lively. From the cocktail hour in the Atrium, bursting with sunlight and conversations among friends and colleagues, to the exquisite dinner program, each moment honored and thanked those who have so generously given their time and treasure to continue the mission and growth of the University.

Staged during the March Board of Trustees meeting timeframe, Trustees and Board members dined with donors, faculty, D.C. area clergy, staff members, and several select students. Robert Neal, chairman of the Board of Trustees, spoke at the top of the program to welcome everyone

PHOTOS BY RUI BARRIOS

## TALK OF THE CAMPUS



to the evening, with book-end invocation and benediction from Most Rev. Timothy Broglio, J.C.D., Archdiocese of Military Services, and His Eminence Robert Cardinal McElroy, S.T.L., S.T.D., chancellor of Catholic University and archbishop of Washington.

Throughout the evening, several videos told the stories of the past year of gifts and those who have stepped forward in a unique way to contribute to the University's Bridge Fund and other critical initiatives (whether for capital development or endowed chair positions). Leadership briefed the hundreds gathered for dinner on significant progress the University has made over the last year. This included an address from President Peter Kilpatrick, as well as Executive Vice President and Provost Aaron Dominguez, who recognized new endowed chairs. H. Joseph Yost, senior vice president for research, and Eileen Dombo, assistant dean of the National

Catholic School of Social Service, also honored recipients of signature grants this past year and outstanding faculty members.

In his remarks, President Kilpatrick called attention to the banner year wrapping up in April 2026, with a record \$84 million in gifts to date. He also highlighted lead donors to the University the last two years, including \$35 million in commitments from the Marble Freedom Trust, a \$32 million nursing scholarships grant from the Bedford Falls Foundation, and a \$10 million leadership gift from Board Chair Rob Neal and his wife Berni's RBN Foundation. He honored every person's gifts, both large and small, which have all come together to help bolster and reconstruct a strong framework from which to move forward into the future.

The Catholic University of America stands ready to grow — shaped by the generosity of its community, anchored in faith and reason, and called to lead with light. ♦



Students work on constructing "The Wave" in the National Building Museum's Great Hall. The 5,000-pound steel spaceframe was on display from Jan. 21 through Feb. 9, 2026.

## STRUCTURES

# Making Waves

BY MARIANA BARILLAS

**Space frames are seen in massive modern marvels** such as the Louvre Pyramid and Las Vegas Sphere. These grid-like structural systems are highly favored for strength, versatility, and sustainability but they can be too costly and complex on a smaller scale. The School of Architecture and Allied Arts seeks to change that.

This past fall semester and into the winter season, Architecture Associate Professor Tonya Ohnstad led an effort to construct "The Wave." This prototype is a first-of-its-kind structural system, developed with graduate student Dave Stephen in collaboration with Mike Graves of industry leader DSI Spaceframes.

The patent-pending technology involves threading a tensioned cable through each strut, a technique that combines compression and tension to create a resilient aluminum structure that is four times lighter than a steel equivalent. The goal is a recyclable and resource-efficient method to mainstream space frames to a wider range of architectural projects.

"This new approach would enable spaceframe design and construction to be more sustainable, efficient, flexible, and affordable," said Ohnstad.

She led a team of two dozen architecture students and outside collaborators to erect the exhibit "Lightness of Strength: The Wave"

in the National Building Museum’s Great Hall, a premier venue for ambitious architecture and engineering experiments as immersive experiences. The theme of durability and fluidity was reinforced by sheets of Dyneema — the world’s strongest fabric, donated by the producer — stretched between each 3D triangle to help evoke a current captured in time.

“To be invited to use this space not just as a venue, but as a laboratory, is a real honor,” said Ohnstad, as she stood under the silent swell of steel upon the completion of the multiyear collaboration with the National Building Museum.

Just as each strut shares the load of the project, team members supported each other as they worked to realize a first-of-its-kind structure from start to finish. Things didn’t always go as planned: they faced a tight assembly timeline in the museum’s hall, and an unexpected shift in materials availability required late-stage design changes.

“There were a lot of challenges,” said Ohnstad. “But to see people come together and problem-solve was just magical.”

Upon completion in January, the museum opened its doors for an after-hours celebration, where University community members got an up-close look at the sheer scope of the project. Visitors relaxed under the awning of the structure, listened to live music from Music Professor Andrew Earle Simpson and University faculty-led jazz group The Earles, got a deep dive into the construction at a custom-built exhibition gazebo, and enjoyed indoor ice gliding on a rink installed alongside the Wave.

The completion of the project is a dream come true for Eleleta “Lou” Seyoum, M.A. 2025, a student lead for The Wave. She looked up to scan each strut as she shared her detailed knowledge of the structure with an infectious enthusiasm.

“It doesn’t feel real. ... I remember the very first sketch and the first 3D print. Seeing it all put together and then people take pictures of it, it’s so amazing,” said Seyoum.

Architecture and Allied Arts Dean Mark Ferguson said the project is a pedagogical tool to train students for life after graduation in one of the nation’s top locations for architects.

“Washington, D.C., has a very vibrant professional community. This project engages us with the community by working outside classroom walls,” said Ferguson. “It gives [students] a taste of the real world before they’re completely immersed in the real world.”

The Wave was supported by American Institute of Architects (AIA), Amazon, Architectural Systems, DSI Spaceframes, Dyneema, Harmon, Hydro, United Rentals, and the Graves Family. ♦

## Thoughts From Our Readers



Thank you for the winter 2026 edition. I am writing to comment on the lovely article, “1975 Cardinal Football,” and more specifically on the photograph of players on the field on p. 26. On the fence in the background of the photo appear the words: “Gamma-Delta-Iota” (GDI) and the name “Virgie.” Would you like to know the back story?

Greek life was thriving on campus at Catholic University in the 1970s. A few of us — Kevin Reilly, Joseph Schwartz, David Patterson, and I — founded an anti-fraternity named GDI, which signifies “Gosh Darn Independents” [edited]. We fielded an intramural football squad which lost every game by hefty margins and played against the well-manned traditional fraternity teams. We eventually had our day in the sun: “Virgie” is Virgie Dagdag (sp?), who was GDI’s candidate for Homecoming Queen. Virgie bested all the other candidates and was crowned queen — whence GDI and Virgie were emblazoned on the fence at the football field. ... I was delighted to see this photo in *The Cardinal*; shout-out to Kevin, Joe, and Dave!  
— Kevin Barry, J.D., Class of 1981

I have always enjoyed my copy of *The Cardinal* magazine ... I never thanked the editorial team for coverage in the spring 2022 issue (p. 42), so thank you! I have been blessed to live 91 years. My years as an undergraduate at Catholic University were the highlight of my life. The Catholic faith on campus shared among faculty and students alike was life-giving. There was a calming feeling and safe haven there from the hectic surge of everyday life.

My friendships were deep and everlasting, and they gave me the fond memories which I now enjoy .... I am so grateful for the time in that community ... and [how] campus life remains with me still.

*P.S. I was fortunate enough to be able to watch the final construction of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception.*

— Thomas Tepper, Class of 1958



Dialed-in spotlights of the University's  
most compelling figures

"THIS IS THE VALOR WE HONOR TODAY — AN AMERICAN  
SOLDIER WHO DIDN'T FIRE A WEAPON BUT WIELED THE  
MIGHTIEST WEAPON OF ALL ... LOVE FOR HIS BROTHERS."

P.18

# From Ukraine to Carnegie Hall, Violinist Takes Center Stage

BY MARIANA BARILLAS



**V**iolinist and Ukrainian refugee Roman Velychko, Class of 2028, speaks about music the way he plays it — with confidence, warmth, and a complete lack of pretense.

He escaped a war zone in 2022, completed the Julliard School's Pre-College Program, and won a Carnegie Hall Ukrainian music performance competition, twice in a row.

"Music brings comfort in tough times, it takes you into another world away from your troubles," Roman said as he practiced in the Rome School of Performing Arts building for his upcoming orchestral performances. He is pursuing a Bachelor of Music with a concentration in music performance (strings).

Roman plucks the strings of his violin, handcrafted by local master Howard Needham. It is on loan as a gift from a donor secured by his instructor at the University, Alessandra Cuffaro. He eagerly shares the instrument's history, construction, and sound — comparing it to his 19th-century French-made violin. In this casual conversation, he displays a depth of knowledge matched only by his infectious enthusiasm for his musical craft.

**"Music brings comfort in tough times, it takes you into another world ..."**

### *Behind the Riff*

He plays Myroslav Skoryk's "Melody in A Minor," a spiritual national anthem for Ukraine, as he shares his story of survival, which began when he was only 14 years old. Both his parents are classical musicians, but it was during the prolonged siege of his home city of Chernihiv that he fully committed himself to violin as his vocation.

For two months in the winter of 2022, after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, he huddled with his parents in their basement without heat or running water. He remembers the sound of sirens, ballistic missile blasts, the hum of drones, and the eerie quiet of once bustling downtown streets. He filled the uncertain silence in between attacks by playing his mother's violin.

After the siege ended, they left the largely destroyed city to live with relatives in Western

Ukraine. Roman had a visa to the United States from a previous visit to see his aunt and her family, so he flew alone to Washington, D.C., in 2022 to live with them.

### *Measures and Scores*

Roman speaks of the war in a measured manner, saying no more than what needs to be said. He plays with passion, but he isn't playing for sympathy. He wants to be treated "just like any other student." And he's determined to make his own way.

He works weekends to support his studies at the University while taking public transit each day to campus from his aunt's house on Capitol Hill, where he's lived since leaving Ukraine. It's time away from practice, but it's a step up from his old commute: For two years of high school, he'd wake up at 2:30 a.m. to catch a bus from Union Station to New York City for a full day of music training at Julliard before returning home the same evening.

When Roman was applying to colleges, his joyful work ethic struck a chord with the Rome School's maestro, Simeone Tartaglione, associate professor of practice, conductor of the University orchestra and orchestral instruments, and conducting area head. Tartaglione helped Roman find scholarship funding and spotted a talent for conducting, which he is developing, as the University is one of the few institutions to offer a conducting emphasis.

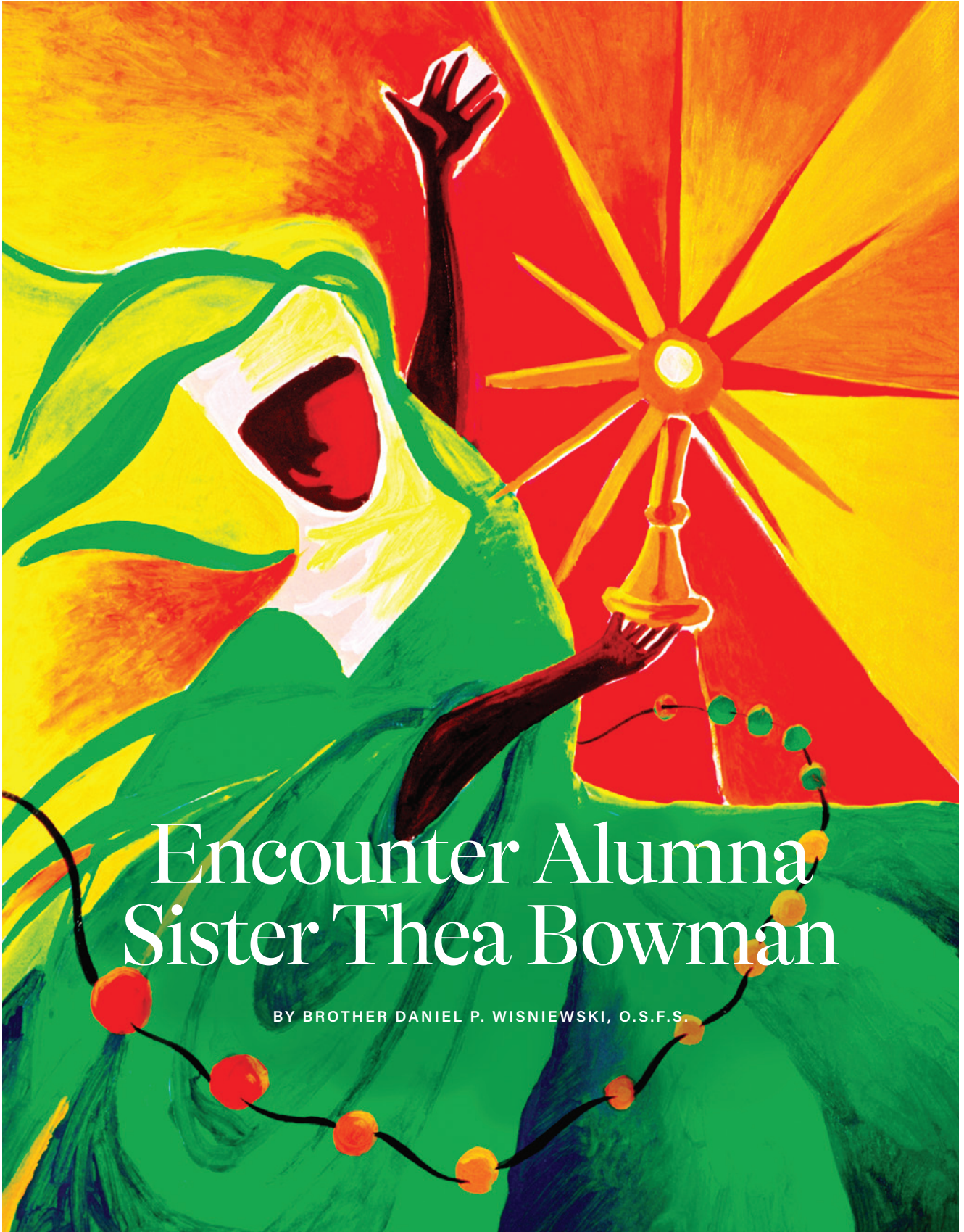
"His violin playing is excellent, his leadership secure and gentle," said Tartaglione. "He is so positive and fills the hallways with laughter."

### *A Lasting Resonance*

In the United States, Roman has found a new rhythm of life as he composes his future.

"I love the openness of Americans, it is easy to find a connection," said Roman. "I'm so happy at Catholic University. I have great teachers and the best of friends."

And in the United States, he has found freedom, a place to flourish, play music and study, and a chance to carve out a new home for himself. His story is like the beginning of so many stories of immigrant families that continue to shape the ever-changing face of our nation. ♦



# Encounter Alumna Sister Thea Bowman

BY BROTHER DANIEL P. WISNIEWSKI, O.S.F.S.

ILLUSTRATION BY MICHAEL O'NEILL MCGRATH, OSFS/WWW.BROMICKMCGRATH.COM

**“Can you hear me, Church?”** This is how Servant of God Sister Thea Bowman, FSPA (1937–1990), often began her presentations — whether it was to school children, Church assemblies, or the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB).

She was a double Cardinal from Catholic University, M.A. 1969, Ph.D. 1972, and she used her English language and rhetoric training to show how oral traditions and music of the Black community preserve their history and values.

Sister Thea’s cause for canonization made a significant stride in February of this year, when the Diocese of Jackson celebrated the closing ceremony for the diocesan phase of her cause. At its conclusion, ten boxes containing documents exploring her life and virtues were sealed and sent to the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints at the Vatican.

This marks the first stage (the “Venerable” stage) of the canonization process; the following two stages would be beatification (“Blessed”) and canonization (“Saint”). We can learn from the example and heroic virtues of this fellow University alumna how to strive for excellence.

## Origin and Journey

A descendant of enslaved persons, Bertha Bowman (her given name before taking the religious name Thea, “of God”) grew up in Jim Crow-era Canton, Miss. A self-declared “old folks’

white Catholic school, this newly professed Black sister had to win the hearts of the children and their parents in the face of racial discrimination, which she did easily. Because she also believed that children could heal and bridge racial differences, she facilitated letter-writing between the children of Blessed Sacrament and her hometown school in Canton.

## Finding Her Voice

The beginning of her graduate studies at Catholic University in 1966 marked the first time that Sister Thea became acquainted with other Black Catholics, and Black religious sisters in particular. Living in the nation’s capital during the 1960s also allowed her to experience a significant period of change, in a country dealing with civil rights and a post-Vatican II Church experience.

Once she earned her Ph.D., she offered the first Black literature course at the University — a trailblazing step into what would become a full schedule of national travel, as she shared her story of encounter between African-American heritage and the Catholic Church.

Her words and presence have touched so many people, even after she died of breast cancer in 1990. One such person is sacred artist and author Brother Mickey McGrath, O.S.F.S., who never met Sister Thea in person, but encountered her through a video biography.

## “Walk your talk. You didn’t get your light only to sit on it.”

child,” young Bertha spent most of her time with her elders, from whom she learned what she called “religious, cultural, and survival values.”<sup>1</sup>

Encouraged to work hard and do her best, she was also taught to care for others and help them advance with her along the way. This care was modeled for her by the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration (FSPA), whom she met at Holy Child Jesus School, the new Black Catholic school in Canton where her mother sent her in the sixth grade.

At age 16, Thea joined this order of Wisconsin-based religious sisters who had shown her what it means to be Catholic. It is clear from her own story (as shared in the Winter 1990 issue of *CUA Magazine*) that these two streams of influence — her blood family and her religious family — cultivated her own teaching and preaching style. One might say her motto was a version of the contemporary adage to “pay it forward;” however, she would later phrase it this way: “Let your light shine. Each one teach one. Walk your talk. You didn’t get your light only to sit on it.”

Her former preaching student, Father Maurice Nutt, C.Ss.R., says that one did not meet Sister Thea; one “encountered” her.<sup>2</sup> Her captivating presence and electrifying smile instilled a welcome into that encounter.

Relationship was a vital part of how Sister Thea taught through example and drew others into learning from each other.

Following her first profession of vows as a religious sister, Thea taught elementary school at Blessed Sacrament Catholic School in La Crosse, Wis. As it was an affluent all-

Her story inspired him to paint a series of nine images marking significant moments in her life and reflecting the inspiring words of spirituals she sang, taught, and studied.

“For the last 30 years, Sister Thea has had a huge influence on my life, both as a religious brother and as an artist,” says Brother Mickey.<sup>3</sup>

During those years, he has spoken and written about Sister Thea and the life-lessons she taught him. He attended the liturgy on February 9, 2026, at the Cathedral of St. Peter the Apostle in Jackson, Miss., and was invited to share scans of 47 pieces of his original artwork to be included among the artifacts sealed in the boxes sent to the Vatican for her canonization process.

Inspired by Sister Thea, he sees her road to sainthood to be a sign of hope in our current day just as much as her preaching and teaching were in her own lifetime.

“She is meaningfully relevant today,” Brother Mickey says. ♦

*Brother Daniel P. Wisniewski, O.S.F.S., B.A. 1995, currently serves on the Alumni Association Board of Directors.*

<sup>1</sup> Thea Bowman, “She Inspires Thousands, But Who Inspires Her?” *CUA Magazine*, Winter 1990, p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Maurice J. Nutt, *Thea Bowman: Faithful and Free*, Liturgical Press, 2009.

<sup>3</sup> “Sister Thea artwork sent to Rome to boost cause for canonization,” *Catholic Star Herald*, February 19, 2026, online.

# Alumni Saints Among Us

Venerable Father Emil J.  
Kapaun, M.A. 1948

BY NICHOLAS KOAS

**In 2025, Pope Francis elevated Father Emil Kapaun’s journey to sainthood to “Venerable” — and here, we are telling his story.**

Father Kapaun was a captain in the U.S. Army and the most decorated military chaplain in American history — posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor by President Barack Obama in 2013.

After the Communist invasion of South Korea in 1950, Father Kapaun was among the first American troops who hit the beaches and pushed their way north through hard mountains and bitter cold. China entered the war at that point with a massive surprise attack — perhaps 20,000 soldiers pouring down on a few thousand Americans. In the chaos, dodging bullets and explosions, Father Kapaun raced between foxholes, out past the front lines and into no-man’s land, dragging the wounded to safety.

When his commanders ordered an evacuation, he chose to stay, gathering the injured and tending to their wounds. When enemy forces bore down, it seemed like the end, but Father Kapaun spotted a wounded Chinese officer. He pleaded with this officer and convinced him to call out to his fellow Chinese. The shooting stopped, and they negotiated a safe surrender, saving those American lives.

Then, as Father Kapaun was being led away, he saw another American — wounded, unable to walk, laying in a ditch, defenseless. An enemy soldier was standing over him, rifle aimed at his head, ready to shoot. Father Kapaun marched over and pushed the enemy soldier aside, and as the soldier watched, stunned, Father Kapaun carried that wounded American away.



## *Virtue and Valor*

This is the valor we honor today — an American soldier who didn’t fire a weapon, but who wielded the mightiest weapon of all: a love for his brothers so pure that he was willing to die so that they might live. And yet, the incredible story of Father Kapaun does not end there.

He carried that injured American, for miles, as their captors forced them on a death march. When Father Kapaun grew tired, he’d help the wounded soldier hop on one leg. When other prisoners stumbled, he picked them up. When they wanted to quit — knowing that stragglers would be shot — he begged them to keep walking.

In the camps that winter, deep in a valley, men could freeze to death in their sleep. Father Kapaun offered them his own clothes. They only had tiny rations of

millet and corn and birdseed, so Father would sneak past the guards, forage in nearby fields, and return with rice and potatoes.

The guards ridiculed his devotion to his Savior. They took his clothes and made him stand in the freezing cold for hours. Yet, he never lost his faith. At night, he slipped into huts to lead prisoners in prayer, saying the rosary, administering the sacraments, and offering three simple words: “God bless you.” One of them later said that with his very presence, he could just for a moment turn a mud hut into a cathedral.

That spring, he held an Easter service for the soldiers. As the sun rose that Sunday, he put on his purple stole and led dozens of prisoners to the ruins of an old church in the camp. He read from a prayer missal that they had kept hidden and held up a small crucifix that he had made from sticks. And as the guards watched, Father Kapaun and all those prisoners — men of different faiths, perhaps some men of no faith — sang the Lord’s Prayer and “America the Beautiful.” They sang so loud that other prisoners



across the camp not only heard them, they joined in, too — filling the valley with prayer and song.

## *Glimpse of the Eternal*

This faith was perhaps the greatest gift to those men — that even amidst such hardship and despair, there could be hope and some touch of the divine. Looking back, one of them said that that is what “kept a lot of us alive.”

Yet, for Father Kapaun, the horrific conditions took their toll. Thin, frail, and with a blood clot in his leg, he began to limp. And then came dysentery followed by pneumonia. That’s when the guards saw their chance to finally rid themselves of this priest and the hope he inspired. Over the protests and tears of the men who loved him, the guards sent him to a death house — a hellhole with no food or water — to be left to die.

And yet, even then, his faith held firm. As he was taken away, he blessed the guards. “Forgive them,” he said, “for they know not what they do.”

Two days later, in that house of death, Father Kapaun breathed his last breath.

## *Catholic University: Forging Saints*

Emil Joseph Kapaun was born in 1916 outside Pilsen, Kan., to Eastern European immigrants. His early life was marked by signs of a vocation to the priesthood.

He was ordained for the Diocese of Wichita in 1940 and assigned to his home parish in Pilsen, where he also ministered at nearby Herington Army Airfield. His service there inspired him to request permission to join the Army Chaplain Corps in 1944; he then served in the Burma Theater during World War II.

The G.I. Bill brought him to The Catholic University of America, where he earned an M.A. in education in 1948. His dissertation was *A Study of the Accrediting of Religion in the High Schools of the United States*. Soon after receiving his degree, Father Kapaun was called to Korea, where his battlefield heroism and pastoral ministry became hallmarks.

When he died as a prisoner of war in 1951, he was buried with many other Americans in a mass grave near the North Korean camp, where his ministry of service would later become renowned. The remains of Americans buried in unmarked graves were later returned and reinterred in Japan and Hawaii. Scientific advances over time allowed Father Kapaun’s remains to finally be identified in 2021, and he is now buried in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Wichita.

Pope St. John Paul II declared Father Kapaun a Servant of God in 1993 and in 2025, Pope Francis elevated him to Venerable. Evidence of miraculous interventions have been submitted to the Vatican to advance the cause of Father Kapaun’s beatification and canonization.

In a 1954 feature in *The Saturday Evening Post*, which brought national attention to Father Kapaun’s virtuous life, U.S. Army Lt. (later Colonel) Mike Dowe, who was a POW with Kapaun, wrote: “He wore the cross of the corps of chaplains instead of the crossed rifles of the infantry, but he was the best foot soldier I ever knew, and the bravest and kindest.” ♦

*Nicholas Koas, B.A. politics, 1984, is a former member of the Alumni Association Board of Directors.*

## Can the Church Ever Have Too Many Saints?

BY JEANNINE MARINO

A cause of canonization is a very lengthy process that requires numerous experts, dedication to research, meticulous attention to details, and most importantly, many hours of prayer. Given the complex nature of the process of canonization, some have wondered if the Church has too many saints already, and if we should turn our attention to other issues.

Responding to this very question, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger stated, “It would be absurd, since in the Church there can never be too many saints. Saint Paul told us unequivocally that we are all called to holiness...”<sup>1</sup>

The future Pope Benedict XVI was correct: there can never be too many saints since the Church’s mission is to proclaim the Gospel and bring each person to holiness. Vatican II described the saints as our “friends and co-heirs of Jesus Christ.”<sup>2</sup> The saints are our friends in Christ, whom we love and who love us. We call upon them to help, protect, and guide us as we follow the Lord. And we can always use more friends in Heaven!

Chances are the average person could not articulate the canonical process of canonization or the theological intricacies of the Church’s teachings on holiness. But ask any Catholic to name their favorite saint, and they have an immediate answer.

Hopefully one day soon, Catholics will be able to say: “Sister Thea Bowman gave me the courage to speak out when I heard hateful language being directed toward another person,” and “Father Emil Kapaun gave me a sense of hope during the darkness of violence and war.” The saints show us the path to holiness so that one day we may join the Lord in Heaven.

*Jeannine Marino, B.A. 2001, J.C.L. 2008, J.C.D. 2020, teaches canon law at Trinity Washington University.*

<sup>1</sup> Marian Ricci, “I Never Said There Are Too Many,” in *30 Days*, May 1989, 18.

<sup>2</sup> Norman Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, (London and Washington, D.C.: Sheed & Ward and Georgetown University Press, 1990), 890.

# Welcome Back, Kohler

New AVP of Alumni Engagement

BY BILL LENNERT

“In a very real way, my life began at Catholic University,” Brian Kohler, B.A. 2001, says.

A seasoned leader in education and advancement, Kohler joined The Catholic University of America in March 2026 as the assistant vice president of Alumni Engagement and Annual Giving. Returning to his alma mater, he arrives with experience leading Catholic institutions, building community with alumni and parents, and directing fundraising initiatives.

“I am honored to return home to Catholic University in this role,” he said. “With my wife, Katie, a 2002 graduate, our daughter, Tricia, now a sophomore at the University, and our 17-year-old twins, Jackie and Thomas, soaking up the traditions, our family’s connection to Catholic University runs deep. We are incredibly proud and excited to continue strengthening our ties to this remarkable community together!”

Catholic education is at the center of Kohler’s career and life trajectory. As a Catholic school educator for 25 years, he served in a variety of roles including teacher, development director, principal, and president. His achievements ranged from developing a campus-wide master plan to increasing alumni participation in events and giving.

He earned a politics degree at the University, followed by an M.A. in education from Loyola University Maryland. As an early indication of his future career path, he served on the student and parent orientation team while at the University, where he also participated in student government.

Join us in offering a warm Cardinal welcome to Brian! ♦



**PORTRAITS**



# Hispanic Ministry: The “Honeymoon of My Priesthood”

Q&A with Cardinal Seán O’Malley

COMPILED BY LILI WYSOCKI

INTERVIEW PRODUCED BY UNIVERSITY ADVANCEMENT



**A**s the United States turns 250, Seán Cardinal O’Malley, M.A. 1972, Ph.D. 1978, reflects on his decades of ministry serving an increasingly significant portion of the country’s population: Hispanic Catholics. Now a “citizen of the world” who is always traveling, O’Malley started his ministry here in our nation’s capital — working with Latin American immigrants.

His ties to the University and its association with his ministry run deep, as he has held nearly every type of position: from student to Board chair and, now, departmental chair honoree.

In 2025, the Cardinal Seán P. O’Malley Endowed Chair for Hispanic Ministry and Evangelization in the School of Theology of Religious Studies was created to both commemorate and perpetuate his work serving Hispanic Catholics in America. His dedication to ministering to this population remains an inspiration, and was shaped in large part by his relationship to Catholic University.

**You have had a number of relationships with the University: student, professor, board member, board chair, and now, someone with a University chair endowed in his name. How did your connection to the University develop?**

About 60 years ago, I came to Catholic University as a graduate student. I was a young Capuchin friar preparing for ordination and what I thought was to be a life as a missionary. They told me my first assignment was going to be on Easter Island, and just before my priesthood ordination, Cardinal O’Boyle, who was the archbishop, called the provincial and said, “You have a brother that speaks Spanish, and you’re sending him to the missions? I need him here in Washington. I only have one priest that speaks Spanish.” So, all of my plans to go to the missions were changed.

I ended up working in D.C. with the many Latin Americans who were arriving, particularly from Central America. And actually, my studies at Catholic University were a wonderful preparation for my ministry. I was teaching here for a couple of years and 42 years ago, I became a bishop. I served for decades on the Board of Trustees, and at one time, I was Chairman of the Board. It’s been a long and a very deep involvement with this wonderful institution, which has prepared countless priests, religious, deacons, and bishops for their ministries in the Church in the United States and throughout the world. And it certainly prepared me. I’m very

proud of my association with the University and am grateful for my time here.

**What does it mean to you personally to have an endowed chair established in your name for the study of Hispanic ministry in America?**

I'm very overwhelmed by it. When I was in the seminary, Pope John XXIII asked one-fifth of the priests in Canada and the United States to go to Latin America. So, I learned Spanish and I thought, "Well, this is going to be my mission." And then it turned out that my mission was to work with the Hispanic population here in the United States, in Washington, D.C.

It was the honeymoon of my priesthood. It was just such an extraordinary experience. So, to have this chair that harkens back to the happiest time of my life when I was in Hispanic ministry and to realize its importance in today's Church in the United States, I'm very excited about this. I know many bishops and religious superiors are anxious ... to prepare their people to work in ministry, and particularly in ministry with the Hispanic population. So, I think it's foresighted of Catholic University to have this chair and this emphasis, and hopefully many bishops and superiors of religious communities will take advantage of it and send us people to prepare for this ministry.

**How is this chair significant to the University and its mission of research, teaching, and service to the Church?**

It is vital to prepare people for ministry among this demographic, which is so important in our Church, just numerically. It would be a terrible shame if the Church did not respond to this pastoral need. I think this chair is an opportunity for our Church to prepare people and also a place where a dialogue can take place ... where we can learn how to do things better and that will be at the service not only of the people that ... are part of the program, but the dioceses that will benefit most.

**What skills are most important for pastoral leaders engaging with Hispanic Catholics?**

Well, certainly the language is important, but it's not just the language. It's understanding people's culture, understanding their religious traditions. There is such rich popular religiosity among the Hispanic peoples, and that popular religiosity has such a capacity to bring people

**"There is such rich popular religiosity among the Hispanic peoples ... So, in Hispanic ministry, it's important to know what these traditions are and also how to give that a pastoral, catechetical, scriptural, and liturgical context and make it something that will truly bring people closer to their faith and to the Church."**

together. So, in Hispanic ministry, it's important to know what these traditions are but also how to give that a pastoral, catechetical, scriptural, and liturgical context and make it something that will truly bring people closer to their faith and to the Church. Hopefully, this chair will be at the service of our Church and begin the kinds of conversations that will lead to greater commitment and greater efficacy in our pastoral life.

**As bishop, how do you help others understand the University's unique relationship with the Church, going back to our founding by the U.S. bishops?**

Historically, the importance of The Catholic University of America is huge. When I was growing up, I think there were 13,000 Catholic schools in the United States, with millions of religious teaching in them. So during those decades, Catholic University was preparing thousands of religious to teach in these schools and training all kinds of priests. So many bishops have received our formation here at the University. And I'm thrilled that Bishop Sheen is going to be beatified this year — one of our great teachers here at Catholic University, whom I knew very well.

What we have done historically is immense. Today, this is the bishops' University, so in many of the various topics that are very important in the life of the Church — whether it be immigration, the Gospel of life, or medical ethics — many themes touch on the life of the Church. It's not a regional effort; it's something that is at the service of the entire American church and something that Catholic University has done so well since its founding. ♦

IN DIALOGUE

# Dialing Down Political Polarization

Can students disagree about politics  
without turning into enemies?

BY MARIA I. LOVE

**T**hrough the implementation of various programs that encourage student dialogue, Catholic University's Department of Politics aims to diminish political polarization on campus — in the classroom, in its research focus, and through student training. These efforts reflect Catholic social teaching, which emphasizes human dignity, dialogue, and the search for the common good.

"The Founding Fathers never wanted political parties; they warned against them and did not include them in the Constitution," said Matthew Green, professor of politics and recent winner of the American Political Science Association's prestigious Barbara Sinclair Lecture Award. "Had they known they were going to emerge anyway and eventually help presidents expand their formal powers, they might have written the Constitution very differently."

Green delivered these remarks during the University's inaugural President's Day lecture on February 19, 2026. In his lecture, he urged Congress to adopt a reform agenda that could help restore Constitutional checks and balances and limit the harm caused by extreme polarization. Such reforms could include adding new statutory limits on the president's exercise of power and opening up the legislative process to more lawmakers from both parties.

## *Taking Action*

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Students have taken an active role in combating polarization and incivility in American culture, with the help of new politics courses, such as “AI Policy and Ethics” and “Political Polarization.”

These courses were developed through a grant that Maryann Cusimano Love, chair (at time of publication) and associate professor of politics, received from Duke University as part

of its Project on Civil Discourse. Convening with experts from around the country, faculty shared best practices for how to teach hot-button issues and lead classroom discussion with students in a civil, rational way.

Student projects generated from these courses include everything from organizing events co-sponsored between College Democrats and College Republicans to meeting with AI creators and encouraging the development and use of AI to increase social cohesion, rather than monetize extremism.

Graduate student Grace Connors was selected as a summer fellow at the University of Notre Dame’s Kroc Institute of Peacebuilding, where she examined how the AI algorithms driving social media exacerbate polarization. She contends that AI, social media algorithms, and political incentives often magnify the loudest and most extreme voices — but they don’t have to. In fact, she found different ways that AI can be used to strengthen communities, through public safety initiatives or administrative assistance for small businesses, for example.

## *Learning Real Dialogue*

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Some students say political discussions in class can feel risky, worrying that such conversations will descend into mere bickering. In response, they have partnered with organizations like Braver Angels, designed to create spaces where disagreement can happen without hostility.

The program works to build community and help establish friendships, understanding, and goodwill across partisan and other identity differences. Braver Angels aims to serve as “a citizens’ organization uniting ‘red and blue Americans’ to depolarize America, find common ground, and strengthen our democratic republic.”

“It’s a great opportunity to build relationships and dialogue across the kind of polarized atmosphere in our country right now, and give



Matthew Green, professor, politics



Marta Bystrowska, B.A. 2026, politics

students the skills to continue to have these kinds of respectful civic dialogue going forward,” said Marta Bystrowska, B.A. 2026. “What’s so unique about Braver Angels is that it is experiential. You can be taught, you can be told, you can see a presentation of how civil discourse works, but I think it’s one thing to learn about it and then another to experience it firsthand. That experience of actually engaging in a civil discourse benefits students greatly and then allows us to be able to apply it outside of our program, in all aspects of life.”

One such exercise this past semester was the campus debate “Should We Abolish ICE?” Sponsored by the Politics and Global Studies departments, Braver Angels, College Democrats and College Republicans, and the Alexander Hamilton Society, the event drew hundreds of students together to talk about a polarizing issue in America today. The event’s goal was to provide a unique debate format moderated by a panel. Students took turns sharing their ideas and answering questions, fostering dialogue

over arguments. The overall objective was to foster respect and civil dialogue across party lines, as an educational experience and exercise in civic debate and friendship.

“I think a liberal arts education can only properly flourish if students feel welcome to speak their minds and have that freedom of expression, and can understand that it doesn’t have to just lead to gridlock or anger or polarization,” Bystrowska said. “We want to empower students and give them the skills they need, so they don’t feel like they have to be quiet in their classes [or in public forums] but can engage positively with one another.”

In a social media post about the event, President Peter Kilpatrick wrote: “Democracy runs on persuasion. And persuasion depends on seeing the good faith behind opposing viewpoints. The sneering, scolding tone of American politics today is great for politicians, fundraising, and cable news ratings, but terrible for the country ... If political professionals have abandoned civil, empathetic debate, then it’s up to young Americans to develop those crucial democratic skills for themselves. And it’s up to universities to prepare their students for the rigors of virtuous citizenship in a divided era. Our students — steeped in Church teaching about human dignity and flourishing — are uniquely equipped to help elevate our public discourse in the future.”

**“It’s a great opportunity to build relationships and dialogue ... [and] give students the skills to continue to have these kinds of respectful civic dialogue going forward.”**

## *Character and the Common Good*

Politics faculty also combat polarization through participation in the Cultivating Virtue initiative, sponsored by the Wake Forest Educating Character grant. Through this \$1 million grant to Catholic University, students are invited to practice virtues, not merely study them.

As part of the Cultivating Virtues program, Michael Promisel, assistant professor of politics, created a new course called *Priests, Prophets, and Kings: Leadership in the Catholic Tradition*. This course explores the history, guiding principles, and animating virtues of leadership in the Catholic tradition — namely, prudence, humility, magnanimity, and docility. Through the study of scripture, Church social teaching, the lives of saints, and simulations of prudential decision-making, the class aims to understand what leadership is in theory and the best methods for cultivating its practice.

Other politics classes participating in the program, such as *Global Issues and AI Policy*, offer students opportunities to grow in virtues such as honesty, friendliness, empathy, and teamwork — all virtues that advance civic behavior and combat destructive polarization.

## *What's at Stake*

As the United States celebrates its 250th anniversary, the question facing many campuses is whether political disagreement will deepen divisions or strengthen democracy. And at Catholic University, faculty and students are betting that learning how to listen may be just as important as learning how to argue.

There has been some evidence of democratic decline in some of the longest-standing most-developed democracies like the United States, the oldest constitutional democracy on the planet.

At this moment, Andrew Yeo, professor of politics, and his research on South Korean politics seems critical, as South Korea provides a good model of how a developed democracy can “bounce back” from possible decline.

When Pope Leo XIII chartered The Catholic University of America, he urged the University to “give the Republic its best citizens.” As we mark 250 years of the United States, our students and faculty are personally invested in building up educated, articulate citizens who can defend and discuss the greatest formative issues of our time. ♦



Michael Promisel, professor, politics

LETTERS FROM ABROAD

# The Emerald Thread

## Catholic University's Enduring Irish Legacy

BY KATHRYN MULLAN



It's been said that the Irish helped to build 19th-century America. And they are certainly a central part of the founding of The Catholic University of America — woven into its very fabric since 1887.

Just as it helped to form numerous elements of the United States and its “Great Experiment,” the Irish diaspora was pivotal to the success of the University from its earliest days. Just look at the names etched on the buildings across campus (O’Connell, Shahan, Hannan, O’Boyle, etc.) and those of our University Presidents (Keane, Ryan, Corrigan, and Garvey, to name a few).

The Irish who emigrated to America were critical to efforts in building up the Catholic Church — defending religious liberty on both the national and state level and taking part in active civic life.

The Catholic University of America has always been a place where the contributions of Irish civilization have been appreciated, and where the Irish themselves have been warmly welcomed — especially those many immigrants of Irish descent who came to the U.S. in search

of freedom, opportunity, and a better quality of life.

### *Threaded Ties of Tradition*

The University’s close ties to Ireland began as early as 1896, when an Endowed Chair in Celtic Languages and Literatures was established. Father Thomas Shahan (who was then a professor of church history, and later consecrated bishop in 1914) solicited \$50,000 from the Ancient Order of Hibernians for the endowment, and from that time, a unique emphasis on Celtic/Irish culture and heritage became an enduring part of University life.

Such was the prominence of this focus that, by 1904, the leading Irish poet, William Butler Yeats (having begun his Celtic cultural revolution in Dublin with the founding of the Abbey Theatre), added Catholic University to his first tour around the U.S. Yeats gave a lecture on campus, stressing the importance of reviving the Irish language. He was impressed with the

University as a Catholic institution that still promoted freedom of thought and speech — the like of which he felt he had not found in Ireland at that time.

Over the years, various donors stepped in to help the University build a substantial library of Celtic and Irish materials. Now housed in the University’s collection, these include pamphlets from the 1600s; a collection of books that cover a span of Breton treasure, from literature and archaeology to languages, law, and Celtic folklore; and key holdings from the Irish Literary Revival in the early 20th century.

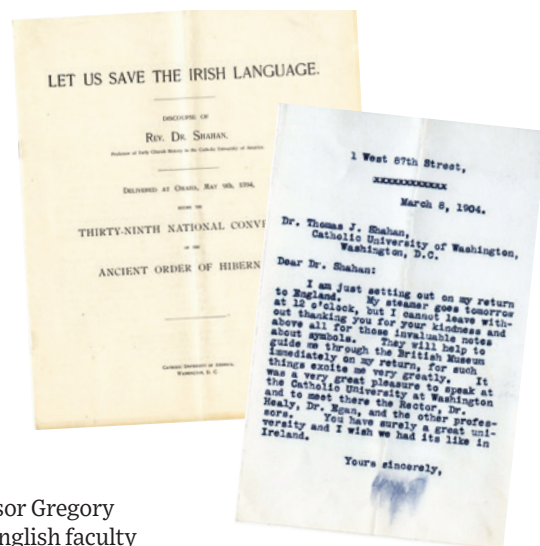
By 1921, as R.J.C. Adams recounts in his 2022 study, *Shadow of a Taxman*, the University campus even became a fundraising hub to support the new Irish Republic and its fight for nationhood.

The Catholic University of America was the venue for the launch of the Dáil’s second bond drive, known as the Second External Loan, in November 1921. The Dáil’s fundraisers launched the Loan by holding a rally in the University’s gymnasium ... Bishop Thomas Joseph Shahan, the rector of the University, was on the platform, along with Harry Boland and some other clergymen who presumably... were faculty members or related to the University in some way. This loan was raised at the same time as the Anglo-Irish treaty negotiations in London, so was crucial in strengthening the negotiating hand of the Dáil. The endorsement of the Catholic hierarchy, including The Catholic University of America, was a big part of that. To the best of my knowledge, Catholic was the only University used for this purpose, and certainly the only one with such prominence in the campaign.

## *Immersing in Ireland*

As a way to keep the Irish-American connection alive, Professor Patrick Tuite founded the Irish Summer Institute in 2010, when the University’s Center for Global Education was looking to grow more faculty-led study abroad programs.

Tuite had just published his book, *Theatre of Crisis: Performance of Power in the Kingdom of Ireland 1662–1692* (2008), and wanted to share his research with students: teaching the plays that he examined, exploring the major events that shaped them, and experiencing them in the actual locations that inspired their creation.



In 2013, Professor Gregory Baker joined the English faculty and combined forces with Tuite to expand the Irish summer experience as a fully immersive six weeks of study. The program explores theatre, history, culture, and literature throughout Ireland’s cities and countryside. Baker has since helped to restore the Irish Studies program as a more formal curriculum, making the University a place where Ireland’s key contributions to the world are still studied and celebrated widely. Current students may now earn an Irish Studies minor, which includes six courses: one Irish-based history course, an Irish literature course, and an Irish language course. The other three-course requirements are flexible electives, allowing students to choose a more language-, history-, or literature-intensive focus. Baker is now the director of the program.

## *Layers of History*

Under the joint tutelage of Professors Tuite and Baker, the Summer Institute continues to grow. Students explore the great works of drama and literature, while learning about the historical and political contexts that frame the works of art themselves. Between the Kilkenny and Dublin locations, mornings are stacked with course study, while afternoons are spent exploring the historical, literary, and cultural places they have read about and discussed in class. Excursions might include a hike in the Wicklow Mountains to see St. Kevin’s Bed at Glendalough, a visit to Howth Castle, a tour of Smock Alley Theatre, or a frigid swim in the Irish Sea, not far from the one-time home of Irish novelist James Joyce.

In Kilkenny, Tuite leads the theatre studies portion of the trip. Examining works by Roger

Boyle, Katherine Phillips, and of course, William Shakespeare, he strives to show students how historians and playwrights in England, Scotland, and Ireland imagined Ireland and the Irish during an especially dynamic era.

“I focus on the span of dramatic works that were created between 1590 and 1783 across the British Isles. Kilkenny was the center of Catholic leadership, power, and culture up to 1650 and is also a beautiful setting for these studies,” Tuite said.

The highlight of his academic year, he said, is spending six weeks in Ireland with a new cohort of students. “What is most edifying to me is sharing the stories and research I am investigating and working on for my next book and inviting students to participate in this process,” Tuite said. “Through this collaborative exchange, all of Irish history becomes different for them.”

Halfway through the six weeks, Professor Baker meets the cohort in Dublin and leads them through the rest of their time in Ireland.

Baker said, “For me, it’s really all about having students experience what Ireland is today, while also learning about its important historical events and strong political past. The most wonderful thing I’ve always found about Irish literature is the way in which history, politics, and literature are all tied so closely together — along with the languages, English and Irish ...”

He added, “Dublin becomes a living classroom where we go to the Dáil, for example, see and sit in the Irish Parliament, and then read the 1916 Proclamation of the Irish Republic outside the General Post Office. Likewise, when we study James Joyce’s 1922 novel *Ulysses*, that same afternoon, we’ll head out to the Martello tower in Sandycove to see precisely where ‘stately, plump Buck Mulligan’ was shaving his face.”

The moment of seeing and reading the Proclamation of the Irish Republic, Baker said, is especially powerful for students, perhaps because some of Ireland’s rebels themselves drew inspiration from the language of the United States’ Declaration of Independence.

“Like America, Ireland has always been inventing and then reinventing itself, but as we know, there are watershed moments in history, moments when new vistas of possibility emerge, where new visions of social and political life can be imagined or ‘fabricated.’ Like 1776, 1916 has become the very symbol of that,” said Baker. “The rise toward independence began stirring in the 1890s with Charles Stewart Parnell and swept across the Irish Literary Revival into the early 20th century — everything we read in our class ties us to a place in Dublin where we can see history happen and contemporary Ireland take shape.”

With Dublin’s modern, ever-changing environment, and Ireland as part of the European Union with ties now to the Continent, the summer experience never gets old for either Baker or Tuite.

## *A Growing Irish Legacy*

In 2019, the summer program gained extra support and widened access when a generous donor and alumnus, Stephen Twohig, M.A. 1978, stepped forward and created the Twohig-Sullivan Family Fund as a means of providing scholarships for students to attend the six-week institute.

Twohig’s family began arriving in America in the early 1900s, and many of them joined the Allied Forces on the frontlines of France in World War I. Several of his relatives returned to America after the war ended, but others went back to Ireland to fight for the emerging Republic.

Twohig originally came to Catholic University following his own military service in the U.S. Marine Corps. Returning to America in 1976, he wanted to pursue higher education, and the economics department chair at the time,



Tuite (second from right) with a student cohort in Kilkenny



Baker (left) with students in Dublin

Professor Alexander Woronicak, welcomed him as a returning veteran. He never forgot that kindness, or the way the University as a whole embraced his post-deployment transition.

When Twohig retired from his career in business, he wanted to give back to the University in a unique way.

“A nondescript financial contribution without purpose wasn’t of interest to me,” he said. “I worked with then-Dean David Walsh and set up the Twohig-Sullivan scholarship program to honor my family’s service to this great country, as well as our ancestral ties to Ireland and its fight for independence. It became the Twohig-Sullivan Scholarship Fund for Irish Studies.”

With his proud Irish heritage, Twohig has committed to help the Irish Summer Institute grow at The Catholic University of America, pledging support to new cohorts of students in this immersive experience.

“I would love to see this program grow to 20 students every summer, with each one having full scholarship support,” said Baker.

David Moretti, B.A. 2025, would not have been able to experience Ireland in this way if not for the full support of the Twohig-Sullivan scholarship.

“When someone sponsors an experience that is as rich as the Irish Summer Institute, it puts students in a position to succeed, it motivates them,” said Moretti. “It motivated me to be as open to the experience as I possibly could be ... to take a leap of faith and travel to a new place and try something new.”

## *Coming to Life*

For Amelia Bamsey, an economics major graduating in May 2026, this opportunity to spend six weeks in Ireland in 2025 was a top highlight of her time at Catholic University.

“Just being there, I realized how important literature was and still is to the culture of the Irish as storytellers — and the writings’ impact on the history and shape of a new nation from 1916 onward,” Bamsey said. “The stories capture both the literal history and the symbolic identity, and Irish citizens today still know and care about it.”

She loved the experience so much she helped a friend apply for the 2026 Irish Summer Institute cohort.

“The community aspect of the trip was also beautiful, which had something to do with how united we were around the uniqueness of the cultural experience,” noted Bamsey. “Together, we were learning and making the same realizations about what culture is, what freedom is, what art is. We were 12 in our cohort, and each of us had different majors and points of expertise and views — but those friends are some of my closest connections.” ♦



The Irish Summer Institute receives generous support from the Twohig-Sullivan Family Fund, but Catholic University hopes to grow the scholarship capacity of this program for the future. We want more students to have opportunities for immersive learning, to understand the University’s special connection to Ireland and the Irish experience of America.

On behalf of Stephen Twohig, we are launching an additional funding dollar-for-dollar match of up to \$10,000 to raise \$20,000 in total. Join this initiative and keep this distinctive Irish-American tradition alive at The Catholic University of America!

**Scan the QR code to be part of the challenge and support this legacy.**



# Reflections from Special Collections: Catholics in American History

BY SHANE MACDONALD

In March 1790, the newly-inaugurated President George Washington wrote a response to a congratulatory note sent by Archbishop John Carroll of Baltimore (1735–1815) on behalf of the Roman Catholics of America. In his “Answer to the Roman Catholics of the United States of America,” Washington tells American Catholics that he hopes to see “America among the foremost nations in examples of justice and liberality” and that “fellow-citizens will not forget the patriotic part” that Catholics played in the Revolution.

It is in the spirit of this note that The Catholic University of America Special Collections took time this year to reflect on the Semiquincentennial of the United States, honoring the moment with an exhibit now on display in Mullen Library (through August 2026).

Since the nation’s inception, numerous citizens of different ethnic, religious, and regional groups have contributed uniquely to its development. Our focus in Special Collections is to provide the space and materials for studying the history of American Catholics — and in that capacity, we are well-equipped to reflect on Washington’s letter to U.S. Catholics in the 1790s.

Throughout the past 250 years, Catholics have sought to strengthen the connections between their Catholic and American identities. Like all groups, Catholics are not monolithic and have been on virtually every side in American history. From anti-slavery movements and labor organizations to civil rights and immigration, Catholics have been an active force in the nation’s development.

The exhibit we curated this year invites viewers to use each object as a starting point to ask questions about the definitions of American history, identity, values, and civics. The ultimate goal is to keep these conversations alive about what “American identity” is and what makes us a nation — ever-changing and yet rooted in core founding principles.

*Inside the Exhibit*



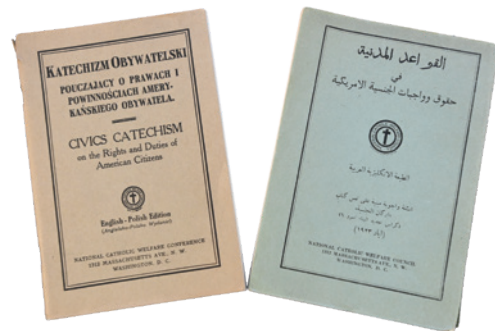
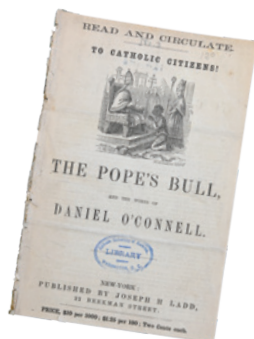
**“An Account of the Conflagration of the Ursuline Convent” by a Friend of Religious Toleration, 1834**

This pamphlet reflects on and condemns the events that led to the 1834 burning of a Massachusetts Ursuline Convent and school by an angry mob. Anti-Catholic and anti-immigrant rhetoric was inflamed in the 1830s. Following salacious rumors about the Ursulines, a crowd gathered outside the convent’s gates on August 11, 1834, and proceeded to burn down the building without interference from authorities. The Ursuline community fled to Quebec and New Orleans after this event.

**The Pope’s Bull, and the Works of Daniel O’Connell, 1858**

As some Catholics engaged in the slave trade, others saw their faith as antithetical to the institution. This pamphlet, written to coincide with the 1858 presidential election, urges Catholic voters to oppose the expansion of slavery to western territories. It cites papal bulls and Catholic teaching to ascribe natural rights to all humans and condemn enslavement.

Like other marginalized groups in the nation’s history, Catholic Americans have faced challenges of exclusion, othering, and violence. Immigration laws, attacks on religious houses and education, and myths about the loyalty of Catholic leaders persisted from Colonial times through the 20th century.



**Civics Catechisms (Polish and Arabic), 1920**

The National Catholic Welfare Conference (NCWC), predecessor to today’s USCCB, printed “civic catechisms” in numerous languages to provide civic education to newly-arrived immigrants in the 1920s. The NCWC worked against quota systems for immigrants, while striving to provide resources to bring new arrivals into the civic rights and responsibilities of U.S. citizens.



**Commission on American Citizenship textbooks, 1940s**

Beginning in 1938, Catholic University followed calls from the Vatican to link Catholic faith with civic education. The result was the Commission on American Citizenship, which produced a number of textbooks for parochial schools during the 1940s, linking American civic values with Catholic social teaching.



**45-star American Flag, 1890s**


This flag showcases the expansion of America, growing from 13 to 45 states by 1896. After the addition of Utah to the Union, this was the official flag from July 4, 1896, to July 3, 1908. It belonged to Terence V. Powderly, a Catholic labor leader and immigration official in the Gilded and Progressive eras and was flown during the Spanish-American War. ♦

# Land of Possibility: America at 250

COMPILED BY DAVE HAZEN AND KATHRYN MULLAN

ILLUSTRATION BY JOCELYN O'LEARY





The United States of America is celebrating its 250th birthday. This is not a moment for nostalgia — it's a moment for honest reflection.

A quarter millennium ago, Catholics in this new republic made a wager that faith and freedom could not only coexist but also enrich each other. That wager is still open, and how we answer it matters more than ever.

The Catholic University of America was founded to form leaders for exactly this kind of moment. Not to retreat from the complexity of our time, but to meet it — with faith, with reason, and with the courage that comes from knowing who you are and Whose you are.

In the spirit of this moment, Archbishop William Lori, S.T.D. 1982, Archdiocese of Baltimore, has published the pastoral letter “Charity & Truth: Toward a Renewed Political Culture” as both a call and a challenge to all citizens in this age.

In the tradition of his predecessor Archbishop John Carroll, who held the first Catholic See in the United States, Lori’s January 2026 letter has founding connections and the weight of tradition that is both American and Catholic. In this letter, Lori, former chairman of our University Board of Trustees (2003–2009), emphasizes that faith and freedom feed one another — but we have to do our part to unlock that fruitful coexistence.

Seven key sections of this pastoral guidance seem especially appropriate as we reflect on America at 250, so we excerpted and reprinted them below with permission from the Archdiocese of Baltimore, along with illuminations offered by six Catholic University faculty members.

## A Moment of Grace and Responsibility

As our nation approaches the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, we find ourselves invited into a moment of profound reflection and renewal. Anniversaries are not merely occasions for nostalgia or celebration. Authentic remembrance always orients us toward renewal; it calls us to consider not only who we have been, and who we are becoming — but, by God’s grace, who we are called to be.

This anniversary can be a moment of grace if embraced also as a moment of responsibility. For while we rightly take pride in the achievements of our nation and the vibrancy of our Catholic faith, we cannot ignore the fractures, wounds, and crises that mark both our national life and, sadly, even at times our ecclesial life. The task before us is not to romanticize the past but to offer a hopeful and credible witness today.

At the heart of this witness is a truth the Church never ceases to proclaim: The human person finds his or her full meaning and dignity only in Jesus Christ. As the Second Vatican Council teaches, “Christ ... fully reveals man to man himself

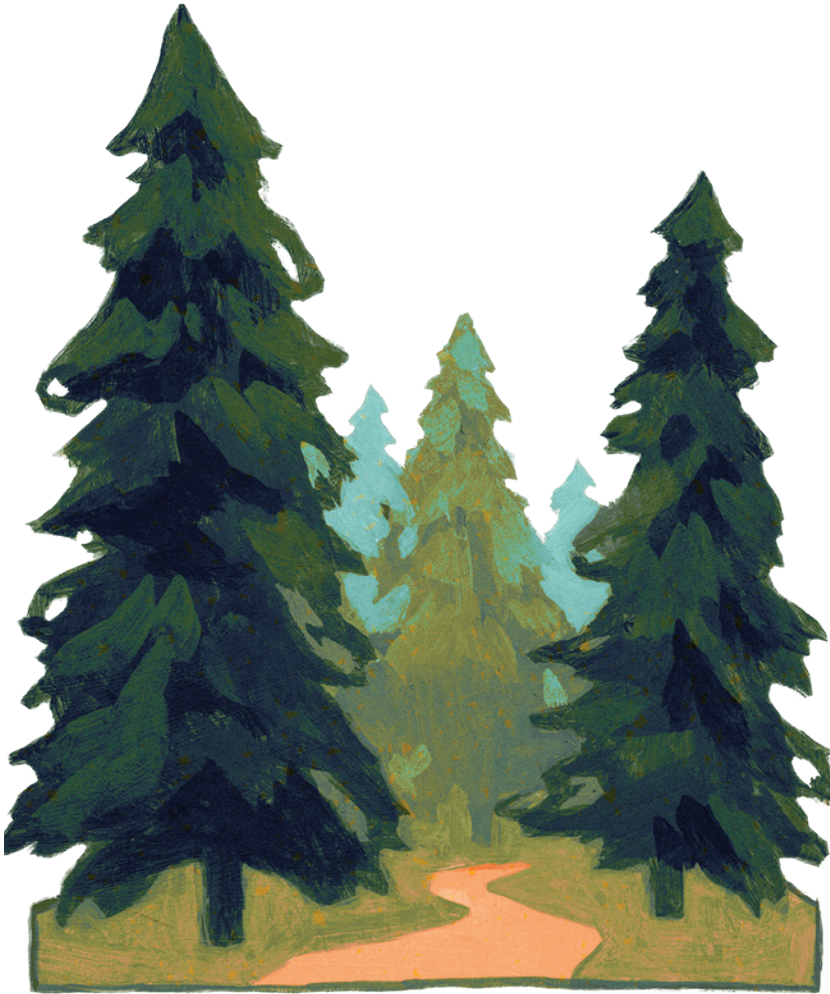
and makes his supreme calling clear” (Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes* [December 7, 1965], 22). Our reflections on politics, culture, unity, and civic responsibility must therefore begin — and end — with Christ, who reveals both the dignity of the human person and the path to authentic freedom.

## The Cultural Atmosphere We Breathe

Like the Church herself, we operate in a cultural atmosphere that is something like the air we breathe. Rarely is it entirely fresh and bracing. All too often it is polluted, even toxic. Such is the political atmosphere in which we find ourselves today. Political discourse has become more vitriolic than usual. Political violence and threats of such violence have erupted. There is deep polarization. Extreme ideologies of both the left and the right are being asserted — ideologies that reveal not only political division, but also cultural and even religious polarization.

“Let us name national secular politicians, lobbyists, and influencers who enrich multinational corporations and a massive military industrial complex, and others who benefit from our polarized, toxic atmosphere. Beneath this surface, however, is a more hopeful reality. Large majorities of U.S. Americans identify as independents. Perhaps the most important issue of our day, how we will respond to the AI revolution, is not coded as liberal or conservative. There is now a clear populist movement which resists the monied interests which run both major parties. Catholics can and should get underneath the toxic polarization and scatter the seeds of the Gospel of life, justice, and peace on ground that is more fertile than we might imagine.”

— CHARLES CAMOSY, associate professor, moral theology/ethics



Few among us are untouched by this. The polarization of our public life has produced an epidemic of loneliness and isolation — an aching sense of being unmoored, misunderstood, or unheard. Pope Francis warned that a culture of indifference and division slowly erodes the human heart (Pope Francis, Homily at Casa Santa Marta, January 8, 2019). At its root, this crisis reflects a wounded understanding of the human person. When we forget that every human being is created in the image of God — body and soul united, destined for communion — we begin to see one another not as brothers and sisters, but as obstacles and threats. Political life then becomes a contest of power rather than a shared pursuit of the common good.

This crisis is not unlike the world Dante depicts in *The Divine Comedy*, where the pilgrim begins

his journey, disoriented and alone in a dark wood, reflecting the fragmentation of the human spirit. As he descends into the Inferno, he witnesses the tragic consequences of communities torn apart, of individuals cut off from one another and from the good that gives life meaning. Yet Dante's path upward begins only when he turns away from this suffocating isolation and embraces a way ordered toward truth, communion, and renewal. But to do this he has to face the depths of the reality of brokenness and sin.

For Dante, the way up was down. His journey out of the depths speaks with renewed urgency to our present moment, reminding us that the air of our political culture can once again become breathable only if we choose the path of unity, responsibility, and love.

"Archbishop Lori's invocation of Dante is a wonderful invitation to approach our nation's own story with renewed wonder and resolve. Though some feel 'in a dark wood, for the straight way is lost,' (1.3), our national adventure in self-government offers a litany of characters, achievements, challenges, and mysteries worthy of study and gratitude. This year, I am inviting Catholic University students to become co-creators in this great adventure — students of the past, stewards for the present, and exemplars for the future. [See p. 26 for reference] Like Dante, we step into the great flow of our history to renew our commitment to 'liberty and justice for all.'"

— MICHAEL PROMISEL, professor, politics

“Bishop Lori’s call for honest celebration finds an American Catholic echo in Cardinal Gibbons, who argued in *The Faith of Our Fathers* (1876) that genuine religious liberty rests not on indifference but on duty — the duty of a conscience fully formed and freely exercised. Gibbons understood: authentic patriotism demands what faith requires — love for what is, and hope for what can be. God so loved the world that he gave his only Son; all things are possible through Him.

In this year of renewal, let us return to Gibbons’ vision: a country of ‘liberty without license, and authority without despotism.’”

— CATHERINE R. PAKALUK, executive director, The James Cardinal Gibbons Institute for Human Ecology

## A Moment for Renewal, Not Nostalgia

Anniversaries can easily tempt us into selective memory — remembering what was noble while forgetting what was painful or flawed. But the Church reminds us that authentic celebration emerges not from denial but from the courage to face both our strengths and our failures.

Our nation has been, from its founding, a land of possibility. Yet, it has also been a land of profound contradictions. The Declaration of Independence proclaimed that all are created equal, endowed with certain unalienable rights. And yet, as we know, many were excluded from those very rights for generations.

Similarly, the Church we love has been radiant with holiness and often disfigured by sin. To love one’s homeland and one’s Church is not to ignore their faults, but to commit oneself to their renewal — always in light of the Gospel.

St. Thomas More, a statesman and martyr, put it best when he declared, “I die the King’s good servant, but God’s first.” His faith-filled patriotism is one we would do well to imitate — a patriotism that loves one’s nation enough to speak the truth and to help it become its best self.

## A New Kind of Politics, Rooted in the Truth of the Human Person

Our world is in desperate need of a new kind of politics — one that begins not with power, but with the truth of the human person revealed in Jesus Christ. Christ, in His Incarnation, affirms the goodness of the human body and the meaning of human history. In His Passion, He reveals the cost of love and the depth of human suffering. In His Resurrection, He discloses humanity’s destiny: not annihilation or domination, but eternal life in communion with God.

Such a vision is not naïve; it is realistic in the most Christian sense of the word. It recognizes that societies flourish only when people place moral and spiritual commitments above the pursuit of power. In “Fratelli Tutti,” Pope Francis called for the “new politics” our world needs — one shaped by social and political charity, animated by a genuine love for the people, and capable of bearing fruit through concrete and effective action. Far from idealism detached from reality, this vision insists that political life grounded in love of neighbor and commitment to the common good is not only possible, but necessary for authentic and lasting renewal.

This new kind of politics calls us to:

- Resist the idolatry of ideology.
- Honor the inherent dignity of every human life from conception to natural death.
- Protect the vulnerable and the marginalized.
- Engage in dialogue rather than accusation.
- Place the common good above partisan loyalty.



“Social work is uniquely positioned to embody this new kind of politics rooted in the truth of the human person. At its core, the profession affirms the inherent dignity and worth of every individual, particularly those who are vulnerable and marginalized. In today’s polarized climate, social workers witness how ideology can overshadow human need, fragmenting communities and limiting compassionate response. A renewed politics calls us to bridge divides through dialogue, advocate for the common good, and accompany individuals in suffering. In doing so, social work bears witness to Christ’s love, calling us to serve with justice and charity.”

— **JO ANN R. REGAN**, dean, National Catholic School of Social Service

This does not mean we will always agree. It means that disagreement becomes a place of encounter, not enmity.

## The Role of Virtue in Public Life

A healthy republic does not rest solely on the strength of its institutions, its courts, or its electoral systems. It rests, above all, on the character of its people. The Founding Fathers themselves understood this well. John Adams famously wrote that the Constitution was made “... only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other” (From John Adams to Massachusetts Militia, October 11, 1798, Founders Online, National Archives). Though he wrote from a Protestant worldview, his insight resonates deeply with the Catholic tradition, which has long taught that political life — not unlike personal life — requires virtue. Law guides and establishes structure, but virtue is what animates.



In our times, we find that many of the crises affecting our political culture — polarization, suspicion, hostility, and the temptation to reduce opponents to caricatures — are ultimately crises of the human heart. They arise from habits of vice: pride, anger, rash judgment, fear, and greed. A renewed political culture will not emerge from policy changes alone. It will require the cultivation of virtue, which begins in individuals and takes root in families. From there, virtue radiates outward into society.

For this reason, the renewal of our political culture cannot begin in legislatures or courts; it must begin in the places where the human heart is first formed. The family is the primary school of virtue, where patience, honesty, responsibility, forgiveness, and concern for

others are learned through daily life. Alongside families stand other vital intermediate institutions — parishes, schools, neighborhood associations, charitable organizations, and faith-based communities — which help bridge the space between the individual and the state. These communities foster habits of trust, solidarity, and civic friendship, teaching us how to live with difference, to resolve conflict without hostility, and to seek the common good rather than private advantage. When these institutions are strong, they form citizens capable of self-governance and respectful engagement; when they are weakened or ignored, society becomes more vulnerable to isolation, polarization, and the overreach of both ideology and power.

“The American founders and framers built so well, in part, because they knew human nature so well. No institutional design or large-scale political activity can long succeed when based on a false idea. Understanding this, the deeply-read Charles Carroll of Carrollton became a leading national figure, the only Catholic signer of the Declaration of Independence, and a key contributor to the thinking behind the U.S. Constitution. At a time when many Catholics were otherwise viewed with suspicion and treated with prejudice, he argued forcefully and persuasively that there need be no difference between Americans and Catholics at their best.”

— **JUSTIN LITKE**, professor, politics



## The Gift and Responsibility of Catholic Citizenship

Catholics in the United States inherit a rich legacy. The American experiment in liberty was shaped, in part, by Catholic minds and Catholic hearts — from the Catholics who arrived in 1634 at St. Clement’s Island, Md., the Carrolls of the 18th century to the millions of immigrants who arrived on our shores.

These immigrant families did not merely seek opportunity; they brought with them a living faith which sustained parishes, built schools and hospitals, and enriched the Church with diverse traditions of prayer, devotion, and service. Often amid hardship, exclusion, and sacrifice, they bore witness to hope, perseverance, and trust in God.

Their contributions remind us that immigration is not only a social reality but a spiritual gift — one that has continually renewed the Church and strengthened the moral and civic fabric of our nation.

Today, we are called to carry forward this legacy. Catholic citizenship is not about aligning the Church with one party or another. It is about witnessing to the Gospel in the public square.

This vision transcends party lines. It is neither conservative nor progressive. It is Catholic.

## A Call to Hope and Commitment

The saints and countless others throughout time did not wait until circumstances were perfect before offering their lives. They responded to God’s call amid turmoil, uncertainty, and division. They remind us that hope is not optimism; it is fidelity. Hope is the quiet, steady conviction that God is at work even when we cannot see the path ahead.

As disciples of Christ and citizens of this great nation, we are called to that same hope. We are called to participate in the renewal of our political culture not out of fear, but out of love — love for God, love for neighbor, and love for the country that has been entrusted to us. We are called to be saints for our time. ... Let us speak with charity and disagree with respect. Let us reject violence in all its forms, cultivate the habits of virtue, and anchor our lives in prayer.

May the next 250 years of our nation be marked by greater justice, deeper solidarity, renewed trust, and a profound respect for the dignity of every human person. May the Church — in the Premier See of Baltimore and throughout the United States — be a leaven of unity and a witness of hope in a world thirsting for both.

May God bless you and may God bless the United States of America. ♦

## A Path Forward — Practical Commitments for a Renewed Political Culture

In this 250th anniversary year, I invite all Catholics — and all people of goodwill — to commit themselves to the following practices:

- 1. Renew Your Prayer for the Nation.** Pray for those in authority. Pray for those with whom you disagree. Pray for peace.
- 2. Practice Civil Dialogue.** Listen before speaking. Seek to understand before responding. Assume good will.
- 3. Reject Hatred and Violence.** Refuse to participate in rhetoric or actions that dehumanize.
- 4. Serve the Common Good.** Volunteer. Build community. Support families. Work for justice.
- 5. Form Your Conscience.** Study Catholic social teaching. Discern your media intake. Develop your capacity for moral clarity.
- 6. Encounter Those Who Differ from You.** Build friendships that challenge your assumptions.
- 7. Foster Hope.** Speak of possibilities, not just problems. Remind others that God is at work. Witness to a different way to live.

“Catholic immigrants were often excluded from mainstream public institutions throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In response, they rooted themselves in parish communities, ethnic solidarity, and lay initiative to build a massive social network — schools, hospitals, and benevolence societies — that served both Catholics and their neighbors. This approach fostered a practical engagement with democracy, encouraging Catholics to balance their faith with the fundamental American commitment to pluralism. Over time, Catholics have moved from a marginalized minority to active participants in civic life who offer moral perspectives on social obligations and the common good that are influential across the spectrum of American public life.”

— **SETH SMITH**, professor, history; vice dean, College of Arts and Sciences



# Politics for Good: A VOCATION OF SERVICE

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To commemorate the 250th anniversary of the United States, Catholic University politics alumnus Robert P. Duckworth, B.A. 1965, M.C.R.P. 1967, donated to the University a historic letter written by Thomas Jefferson. At an April ceremony launching the politics department's inaugural "Politics for Good" blessing and commissioning of all politics students, Duckworth challenged students to use their education in service of the common good.

Special guests at this commissioning ceremony included Archbishop Timothy Broglio of the Archdiocese for the Military Services, who presided and gave the blessing.

At its core, politics can be a vocation for service, and the University's politics department has a long history of advancing the mission: to serve the Church, the nation, and the world and to "give the Republic its best citizens."

Here, we highlight a few recent alumni and graduates who are proving that to be true.

## A Noble Pursuit

“Politics often gets a bad name,” noted Jennifer Holst, B.A. 2000, M.A. 2001. “Associated with a temptation for power, greed, fame, and fortune, the desire to see one’s name in lights. But politics is really a way for us to work together for the common good, to determine and share lessons learned of what policies work to build relationships and community.”



Holst in West Africa

Holst does politics for good every day, helping to save lives with Catholic Relief Services (CRS) in West Africa, advancing international development and the dignity of human persons. She put her undergraduate and post-graduate University degrees into practice protecting the most vulnerable, especially children and pregnant mothers, from the dangers of malaria and hunger.

People fleeing violence, conflict, and terrorism — whether from the remnants of Boko Haram in Nigeria or from groups associated with Islamic State or al Qaeda — are more susceptible to hunger and disease. CRS works to increase community resilience as they recover from the blows of conflict, disease, and food insecurity. CRS, as an international non-governmental organization, integrates trauma healing and peacebuilding into their programs, from distributing malaria netting to families with children under age five to helping communities produce more food with drought-tolerant seeds.

This holistic focus on the human person is not just right in principle; it also achieves better development results in practice. Strengthening market dynamics, local partnerships, and working to support the local Catholic bishops’

peace plans in West Africa and the Sahel, CRS aims to “work itself out of a job.”

Holst credits her Catholic University education in politics for helping to launch her on this path.

“Before my undergraduate studies, I had not been introduced to Catholic social teaching,” she said. “This was eye-opening for me, to be invited to participate in politics and international relations in a way that actually brings your faith to bear on it.”

One of Holst’s politics professors, Maryann Cusimano Love, won the 2026 Lucy Cohen Award for advancing the University’s mission. Love’s research and teaching on Catholic peacebuilding has taken her to war zones around the world, from Iraq to Nigeria to Colombia, documenting the work of the Church and sharing lessons learned in conflict areas, such as how religious actors and organizations work to build social cohesion and peace in their communities in these difficult circumstances.

Love also works with the Holy See Mission at the United Nations, negotiating the reduction of nuclear weapons and Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWs). The Church teaches that “killer robots,” using artificial intelligence controlled autonomous weapons systems without a human in the loop to make life or death decisions, are immoral and unethical, and the U.N. Secretary General has called for a



Cusimano Love with Holy See Mission at the U.N.

global LAWs ban. Love is currently working on the concept and practice of digital ceasefires, to accompany and expand traditional ceasefires into cyberspace.

## In the Trenches

Veronica McCarthy, B.A. 2017, also advances politics for good. Through the U.S. Commission for International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), she raises the voices of those persecuted around the world for their religious beliefs. The USCIRF is an independent, bipartisan agency that monitors violations of freedom of religion; makes policy recommendations to the president, secretary of state, and Congress; and then tracks implementation. McCarthy works alongside retired University politics Professor Steven Schneck, commissioner of USCIRF.

Closer to home, many Catholic University politics alumni serve in state and local offices. State and local politics tend to attract University alumni who want to fix things — from potholes to infrastructure — often with less polarization than the national level.

Holst notes that there's often "a pressure to feel like one's efforts have to produce a huge impact, so you often feel discouraged if you can't fix all problems. But, realistically, change starts small, in individuals, communities, and families. Making that difference in people's lives, whether overseas or in the community where you live, has a ripple effect that is quite impactful."



## Going Forth

At Catholic University's Commissioning ceremony in April, Archbishop Timothy Broglio of the Archdiocese for the Military Services blessed the students. The event also marked a personal milestone for Archbishop Broglio, as during the bicentennial year 50 years ago, he was first ordained a deacon on his road to the priesthood.

His public service has led him around the world, serving as a diplomat to the Holy See, head of the U.S. Catholic bishops conference, and now as shepherd to the 1.8 million Catholics serving in the U.S. military and their families.

Archbishop Broglio encouraged students to similarly consider their work in politics as a vocation to serve others.

"Perform corporal works of mercy — feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless ... Pray for your enemies," he said. "Listen and talk with those with whom you disagree, especially within your own family. Disagree, debate civilly, stand for your rights, but always remember in your heart that we are all children of God and deserve dignity and life." ♦



**Where have you seen  
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# Class Notes

## Aging Gracefully

① **Monsignor James C. Turro, S.T.L. 1948**, turned 104 years old on Jan. 26 — and now is believed to hold the title of oldest priest in the Archdiocese of Newark — and likely the oldest Catholic cleric in the United States. Turro was ordained a priest in 1948 and began his ministry at Holy Trinity Church in Hackensack. After his Catholic University education, he earned a certificate in sacred theology, followed by a certificate in sacred scripture from the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome. He later joined the faculty of Immaculate Conception Seminary at Seton Hall University, N.J., where he taught for 60 years. Church leaders estimate that he has, over his lifetime as a priest, presided over approximately 900 baptisms and 400 weddings in Our Lady of Mercy Church in Park Ridge alone, where he has become a beloved figure — in part due to his very short homilies (usually less than a page)! Although he is technically retired, he still celebrates Mass and offers pastoral counsel as needed to parishioners.

**Elaine M. (Ruddon) Averman, M.S.L.S. 1951**, celebrated her 100th birthday on May 24. During her time taking classes at



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Catholic University, she met her future husband, John, and they married in 1952. One of her earliest positions was working at Catholic University's library. They raised seven children together and in the early 1960s, the Avermans relocated to the Cleveland, Ohio, area. She worked at the Euclid Public Library, where she served as a cataloger; and she helped transition the library from a card catalog to a computerized system. Her final professional role was as a horticultural librarian at the Cleveland Garden Center, where she retired in 1998. Averman continues to live independently in her home in Cleveland, along with a few of her children; she's an avid reader and enjoys crossword puzzles, as well as a good beer.

## Relishing Retirement

**Cathy Costantino, B.S.W. 1977, M.S.W. 1978**, retired from the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) after almost 40 years of federal service as an attorney. During her tenure, she handled receivership, litigation, mediation, and negotiation matters. She also created and directed the first Alternative Dispute Resolution Unit at the agency, and in that capacity, she trained FDIC

employees nationwide in negotiation, systems design, and mediation skills for more than 35 years. Costantino received an award from Attorney General Janet Reno in 1998 for her work on the Inter-Agency ADR Task Force; received the FDIC Chairman's Excellence Award for Outstanding Achievement (twice); and received the Douglas H. Jones Legal Excellence Award — the highest recognition in the FDIC Legal Division — in 2023.

② **Ruben F. Aragón, M.S.L.S. 1982**, retired after 48 years of dedicated service in February 2025. His distinguished career included 40 years as library director of the Thomas C. Donnelly Library at New Mexico Highlands University (NMHU), from January 1985 to February 2025. Prior to his tenure at NMHU, Aragón spent eight years working as a librarian and technical information specialist at the United States Department of Agriculture, National Agricultural Library. His leadership extended to the New Mexico Consortium of Academic Libraries (NMCAL), where he played an essential role in securing General Obligation bonds that provided funding for academic, public, school, and tribal libraries across New Mexico. He served as vice president of the New Mexico Library Association (NMLA) for two terms and was honored at the association's most recent conference for his lifelong contributions and unwavering commitment. He was named New Mexico Academic Librarian of the Year in 2013, received the New Mexico Library

Leadership Award in 2021, and was recently recognized by the New Mexico State Senate for his public service and dedication to New Mexico and its residents.

### Moving Up

**Kenneth "Ken" J. Nunnenkamp, J.D. 1986**, a leading international trade and national security practitioner, has joined Blank Rome LLP in the firm's Washington, D.C., office as a partner in the international trade practice group.

① **Kevin Ryan, B.A. 1989**, former CEO of Covenant House, has rejoined the board of directors of Collier Youth Services in Wickatunk, N.J. Collier Youth Services is a CARF-accredited non-profit organization founded in 1927, dedicated to supporting at-risk youth. Ryan's return comes as Collier Youth Services enters a new phase of program growth and long-term strategic planning to address the increasing mental health, educational, and residential needs of at-risk youth across New Jersey.

**Gustav Chiarello, B.S. 1991**, former Federal Trade Commission attorney, was confirmed as assistant secretary for financial resources at the Department of Health and Human Services. Most recently, he was senior special counsel to the House Judiciary Committee and also served on the Subcommittee on the Administrative State, Regulatory Reform and Antitrust, chaired by Rep. Scott Fitzgerald, R-Wis.



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During the first Trump administration, he served as an attorney adviser to Acting FTC Chairman Maureen Ohlhausen.

**J. Russell "Rusty" McGranahan, B.A. 1992**, has been appointed by the Securities and Exchange Commission as its new general counsel, placing a veteran securities and M&A attorney in the role of the agency's chief legal officer. He will lead the SEC's legal function and provide counsel to the Office of the Chairman, the Commissioners, and staff across the agency.

**Jay Taylor, J.D. 1994**, has joined Stinson's corporate finance practice division as a partner in its New York office. With more than 30 years of experience as a transactional attorney, Taylor advises clients on a wide range of corporate and financial transactions, with a focus on capital markets, equity financing, and strategic business structuring. He counsels corporate entities, equity funds, and financial institutions, from smaller emerging start-ups to leading Fortune 500 companies.

② **Eric Hannis, J.D. 1996**, was appointed by President Trump as the Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army (Strategy and Acquisition Reform) in October 2025. In this role, he works with Army stakeholders, Congress, and industry to advance policies that will allow the Army to transform into a more lethal force by adapting how we buy critical warfighting capabilities.

**Kelly Noonan Murphy, B.A. 1997, J.D. 2000**, and **Ryan Fecteau, B.A. 2014**, serve as representatives to the Maine State Legislature. Murphy is House Chair of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, while Fecteau is the Speaker of the Maine House.

**Joe Sanders, B.S. 1997**, was named executive director of the Daugherty Water for Food Global Institute at the University of Nebraska. DWFI is one of three University of Nebraska (NU) institutes in which talented experts across all four campuses come together to find innovative solutions to challenges facing our state, nation, and world. DWFI addresses the complex challenges of water and food security, and its work directly supports the university's commitment to local impact with global reach. Sanders officially assumed the executive director position in February 2026 and brings more than 27 years of experience as an international development leader, having designed and managed large-scale programs across Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

③ **Tim Ayers, B.A. 1999**, was the director of the State Department office responsible for U.S. security coordination at the Winter Olympics in Milan, playing a crucial role in ensuring the safety of Team USA. His leadership enabled American athletes to concentrate on their performances and pursue gold medals without security concerns. Throughout his career, Ayers has specialized in major event security, making significant

contributions to international safety efforts at prominent events around the world.

**Melissa Torres, M.B.E. 2004, M.S.E. 2005**, is the new executive vice president of technology and regulatory affairs at AdvaMed, the Medtech Association. She joins AdvaMed with over 20 years of leadership in the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and international regulatory policy — most recently serving as associate director for international affairs at the FDA’s Center for Devices and Radiological Health. She is widely recognized for her strategic vision and expertise in shaping regulatory frameworks for medical devices, both in the United States and globally. She has led high-impact teams in both premarket and postmarket activities, fostered collaboration among global regulatory authorities, and driven international harmonization efforts to expand patient access to safe and effective medical technologies.

**Ali Pierucci, M.S.W. 2006**, is the co-founder and co-owner of Sanare PSR, serving Denver, Colo., and the surrounding Front Range counties. At Sanare, the staff co-create healing alongside individuals navigating chronic and persistent mental illness. The community-based model empowers them to support clients in real-time across all seven domains of functioning. Beyond the clinical mission, Pierucci and her business partner, Briana Severine, find great fulfillment in mentoring and

supporting their rapidly growing staff.

④ **Brandon Pettit B.A. 2007, M.A. 2012**, has joined Disney Meetings & Events as an event services manager. In this role, he is responsible for overseeing the planning and execution of meetings, conferences, and special events at the Walt Disney World Resort in Florida. Pettit’s professional events journey began at Catholic University — first as a student employee in the Pryz then as the Pryzbyla Center Manager, overseeing University and conference events.

**Ken Archer, M.A. 2008**, is director of Responsible AI at Microsoft, after having led Responsible AI at Twitch. He is also a Ph.D. researcher in philosophy, cognitive science, and AI at Linköping University in Sweden.

**Sarah (Delaney) Cox, B.A. 2008**, spent 10 years working for the American Cancer Society as a senior manager of Western N.Y., before she returned to school at the University of Rochester and completed an accelerated nursing program. She’s been working as a registered nurse in high risk labor and delivery for two-plus years and recently started teaching the course “Clinical Nursing: Obstetrics” for the University of Rochester’s program.

**Evelyn Lombardo Cusson, J.D. 2009**, has been appointed by Maryland Governor Wes Moore to the Baltimore County Circuit Court. She serves as an assistant U.S. attorney in the office of

the U.S. attorney for the District of Maryland, where she has prosecuted white collar crimes and handled a broad range of litigation in both the civil and criminal divisions. She also serves as the office’s elder justice coordinator, working to raise awareness of abuse, neglect, and exploitation of older adults, and as the president of the Baltimore City Bar Association.

### Accolades

**James B. Ewers Jr., M.A. 1971**, was selected as a Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) Living Legend in North Carolina. This prestigious recognition highlights his significant contributions and impact within the HBCU community. He retired from a distinguished career in both secondary and higher education. As an author and writer, Ewers has shared his insights and perspectives through columns featured in news media outlets across America. He is also a member of the Black Tennis Hall of Fame, reflecting his accomplishments and influence in the sport. He and his wife, Deborah, have three children and six grandchildren.

**Dave Conover B.M.E. 1972, M.M.E. 1976**, took third place at the World Triathlon Championship in the standard distance triathlon (1.5K ocean swim, 40K bike and 10K run) as a member of the USA Triathlon Team in Wollongong, Australia, in October. He continues volunteer work and recently

came out of retirement and is a part-time lifeguard in Northern Virginia.

**Anne Healey, M.A. 1974**, Maryland State Delegate, will not seek re-election in 2026, concluding a distinguished legislative career that began in 1991. Delegate Healey will continue to serve the remainder of her term, bringing to a close nine full terms of service to the residents of District 22 and the State of Maryland.

**Rev. Peter M. Donohue, O.S.A., M.A. 1983**, president of Villanova University, has been named the recipient of the 2025 Globy Award for Lifetime Achievement by the Global Philadelphia Association. The award was presented at the 10th Annual Globy Awards celebration in December 2025, which recognized distinguished Philadelphians whose work has made a lasting impact across the region and beyond. The Lifetime Achievement Award recognizes a leader whose career reflects exceptional dedication, vision, and impact — qualities that have defined Father Donohue’s presidency and his contributions to higher education, sustainability, and civic engagement.

**Michael Moriarty, B.A. 1983**, completed his tenure on the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education after 10 years of service, during which he chaired the state’s early literacy subcommittee and was a member of the budget subcommittee and commissioner evaluation committee. Moriarty was

also an active member of NASBE’s Early Literacy Working Group. He received a 2025 distinguished service award from the National Association of State Boards of Education, which recognizes exceptional contributions to education. Also, he was named the Grand Marshal of the 2026 Holyoke Saint Patrick’s Parade.

① **Paul J. Dollahite, B.A. 1989, J.D. 1994**, has been appointed Register of Wills for Montgomery County, Md., following a unanimous selection by the Circuit Court Judges. Dollahite has practiced law in Maryland for 30 years, including 17 with the Register of Wills office. He is honored to continue a career of public service in this role.

**Daniel Maus, B.A. 1989**, graduated from the University of Notre Dame in August 2025, with a master’s degree in theology. His capstone project and presentation, “Beatitudes for Secular Leaders,” documents and contemporarily applies the leadership lessons found in Catholic social teaching from Pope Leo XIII in 1891 to Pope Leo XIV in 2025. This project relies on a plurality of references to Pope Francis and is a deeply reflective project on his pontificate. Maus’ presentation may be delivered to parishes, diocesan events, service organizations, educational institutions, and business groups who are seeking engagement on what the Church teaches concerning leadership and the treatment of workers.



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He continues to serve as a financial advisor with Edward Jones in Fontana, Wis. He began this career almost 30 years ago, after earning an MBA from the University of Notre Dame.

② **David V. Calviello, B.A. 1991**, was sworn-in as Judge of the New Jersey Superior Court-Bergen County Vicinage on March 28, 2024. Appointed by Governor Phil Murphy and confirmed by the New Jersey Senate to a seven-year term, Judge Calviello is assigned to the Chancery Division-Family Part.

**Rob Dimler, B.A. 1992, J.D. 1995**, earned a certificate of higher education in philosophy from Oxford University’s Department of Continuing Education.

**Charles Keller, B.A. 1992**, earned his doctorate of educational leadership and endorsement in teacher leadership from Youngstown State University in August 2025.

**Janet (Myers) Sutherland, B.A. 1992**, was elected to her third term and represents the 18th Legislative District in Orange County, N.Y. In an uphill race with unfavorable numbers, she walked away with a solid victory and is excited to represent her constituents in her new district. She continues to chair the Rules, Enactments, and Intergovernmental Committee, while sitting on the Human Services and Health/Mental Health Committee. In addition, she represents the legislature on the Human Rights Commission, Aging Advisory Board, and the Housing Task Force

committee. She is in her 11th school year as a school social worker for Orange Ulster BOCES, where she works with middle school students with emotional and behavioral challenges.

**Ana Bonilla-Galdamez, M.S.W. 1997**, was named a 2025 Living Legend in Alexandria, Va. She joins a distinguished group of local leaders who embody the spirit of Alexandria’s community, giving their time, talent, and passion to improving life in the city. She is an Alexandria City Public School (ACPS) social worker who champions underserved youth. She began her professional career in Alexandria in 1993, working as a substance abuse counselor and running HIV/AIDS prevention programs on Mill Road. She currently serves as the family engagement social worker at Alexandria City High School’s Minnie Howard Campus.

**Most Rev. Luís Gonzaga Silva Pepeu, O.F.M. Cap., J.C.L. 1998**, has been named the first bishop of a new diocese, Diocese of Baturité, in Brazil — from territory of the Archdiocese of Fortaleza that Pope Leo XIV created on January 1.

**Most Rev. David William Antonio, S.T.D. 1999**, is coming home to his native Archdiocese of Nueva Segovia in the Philippines — not for a brief visit but as its new shepherd. Pope Leo XIV appointed him as the eighth metropolitan archbishop of the historic Ilocos Sur archdiocese.

③ **Jonathan Pohl, B.S.Arch. 1999**, celebrated the fourth anniversary of

founding Pohl Architects, a full-service architectural company based in Brooklyn, N.Y. This firm provides design solutions for residential, commercial, and community projects.

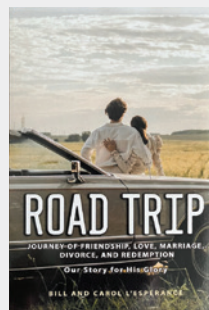
**Brian Jefferes, B.A. 2006**, has completed 20 years of ministerial service as a director of religious education in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. He was presented with the St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Award for 20 years of service by Archbishop Nelson J. Perez in January 2026. He has worked in this position since graduating from Catholic University in 2006. Jefferes is currently the director of religious education for Corpus Christi Church in Lansdale, Pa.

**Steven M. Ayr, J.D. 2008**, partner with Casner & Edwards, was named a “Go-to Business Transactions Lawyer” by *Massachusetts Lawyers Weekly*.

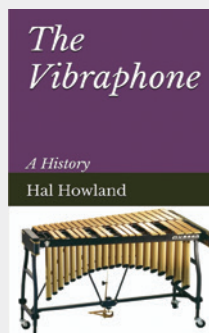
**Patrick Beldio, Ph.M. 2015, Ph.D. 2016**, visiting theology and religious studies professor at The University

of Scranton and research fellow at Georgetown University’s Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs, has received a \$100,000 grant to launch a new program, “Waymarks Toward Reunion: Beauty, Sacred Art and the Road to Freedom.” The grant, awarded by the Creative Arts Collective for Christian Life and Faith (CAC), will support workshops, public lectures, and Waymarks Student Fellowships at Scranton and Georgetown, among other things.

**Kate Webb Newkirk, M.S.W. 2025**, was appointed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. as vice chair to the Advisory Council on Alzheimer’s Research, Care, and Services. She is a licensed graduate social worker and geriatric care manager with Aging and Amazing, LLC. Her experience spans case management, public policy, nonprofit work, and direct care — from supporting residents in long-term care communities to



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lobbying for Alzheimer’s legislation. As a TimeSlips Creative Storytelling Certified Practitioner, she is committed to advancing non-pharmacological interventions and enhancing quality of life for the elderly through advocacy, storytelling, and person-centered care.

### Cardinals in Print

**Thomas T. Bellino, M.A. 1967, Ph.D. 1969, M.A. 1982**, of Hobart, Ind., published his third novel, *Lanikai Brown and The Pink Dolphin* (Greenway Press, December 2025). Set in Hawaii, it is the adventure of a 12-year-old surfer, who discovers that the Hawaiian legend of the pink dolphin may not be merely a tale after all, as he is beyond the reef, waiting for a wave to ride, and then confronted with danger.

④ **Bill L’Esperance, B.A. 1967, J.D. 1974**, and **Carol L’Esperance, B.S.N. 1967**, wrote *Road Trip: Journey of Friendship, Love, Marriage, Divorce, and Redemption: Our Story for His Glory* (Dorrance Publishing Company, September 2025). This book is the story of their healthy early love, divorce in the crazy times of the Vietnam War, Civil Rights Movement, sexual revolution, and post-Vatican II American Catholic world. Then, God’s grace brought them back together in a beautiful (and fun again!) marriage.

⑤ **Hal Howland, M.A. 1977**, published a new edition of his 1976 thesis, *The Vibraphone: A History* (January 2025), in memory

**“I always want to tell my students that being Latina is my strength. My roots carry resilience. Our voices carry our power, and our future is limitless. Believe in you. To every young Latino, please don’t ever forget that you belong in every space. Your culture is your gift.”**

— Ana Bonilla-Galdamez, M.S.W. 1997

**“We’re pulling stones and mortar and wood of the earth, and we do a little bit to shape and polish them and put them into place, but it’s really what God has been doing for a million years on that piece of marble. It’s all co-creation and co-participation in what God is doing. That’s the cool Eucharistic reality of the ‘fruit of the vine and work of human hands.’ He lets us participate in making beautiful things.”**

— Adam Hermanson, B.S. Arch. 1999

of his thesis advisor, Professor Helmut Braunlich (1929–2013).

① **Hope C. Tarr, M.A. 1989, Ph.D. 1992**, is pleased to announce the audiobook edition of her historical novel, *Irish Eyes*, released March 31, 2026. The book is also available in print and ebook. *Irish Eyes* is Tarr’s twenty-sixth published novel and marks the launch of her American Songbook series.

② **Jennifer O’Donnell-Giles, B.A. 1994**, is a nationally recognized sports dietitian, exercise physiologist, and the founder of Eat4Sport — a performance nutrition practice dedicated to helping athletes formulate their nutrition plan to activate the fastest, strongest, healthiest, and best athletes they can be. She has written a children’s book series: *The Pat and Aggie Active Adventure Series*, designed to educate, inspire, and motivate young athletes to fuel their bodies optimally. Each book includes

a parent guide to support real-life application and habit-building at home. The series officially debuted in February 2025 and currently includes three published books, with a total of 18 planned and in the pipeline. The series is rooted in values that deeply align with her Catholic University education: service, education, family, and the development of the whole healthy person.

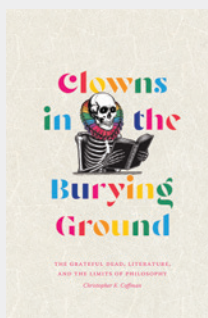
③ **Christopher K. Coffman, M.A. 1999, Ph.D. 2005**, wrote *Clowns in the Burying Ground: The Grateful Dead, Literature, and the Limits of Philosophy* (Duke University Press, February 2026). It is the latest title in the *Studies in the Grateful Dead* series. Coffman presents intertextual readings of the Grateful Dead and their lyrics to argue that the band’s lyricists were deeply and significantly engaged with the literary tradition. Through an analysis of their music, lyrics, and biographies, he



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shows how the group and its individual members drew on the canons of European and American literature to shape both the form and content of their creative work.

### Cardinals in Lights

**John Lescault, B.A. 1980**, and **Dani Stoller, M.F.A. 2024**, were members of the cast of the U.S. premiere of “Rules For Living” at the Round House Theater. The play is a “wickedly funny” yuletide farce about family dysfunction and societal norms.

**Siobhan Fallon Hogan, M.F.A. 1985**, is the host of a new podcast, *Catholics and Cappuccinos*, featured on EWTN’s YouTube Channel. Through hilarious but deep conversations, she interviews entertainers and other prominent cultural figures who have put Christ at the center of their life. She talks about her experiences at Catholic University and expresses gratitude for her time here, highlighting its impact on her life and faith journey. The podcast’s first episode features Jonathan Roumie, known for his role in *The Chosen*; the second episode includes Kevin James, recognized for *Mall Cop*, *Hitch*, and *Solo Mio* (among many).

### Cardinal Showcase

**Clare Winslow, B.A. 1984**, was one of the printmakers participating in the DC Print Fair in the fall of 2025. Although her work is well known across the

DMV, this was her first time presenting at Eastern Market’s North Hall. She was one of the 500 women artists included in the “Women Artists of the DMV” show. She specializes in screen printing using unusual textures in her layered works.

**Adam Hermanson, B.S.Arch. 1999**, principal at IDG Design Group, a Denver-based architecture firm, was inspired by his encounter with Pope St. John Paul II at World Youth Day Denver in 1993, and now builds and beautifies churches nationwide. One of his current projects is St. John Paul II Parish in Thornton right in the shadow of Mile High Stadium where WYD events were held, under St. John Paul II’s patronage.

### Tying the Knot

④ **Gretchen Wade, B.S. 2014**, married Michael Grimard in Rye Beach, N.H., in November 2025. **Annie Wade, B.A. 2017**, was the maid of honor, **Connor Outman, B.C.E. 2017**, was an usher, and **Reagan (McCloskey) Grabowski, B.B.E. 2015**, was a reader. Mike and Gretchen met while ski racing in an adult race league. Many friends from the classes of 2014 and 2017 were in attendance.

⑤ **MacKenzie Stevens, B.A. 2019**, and **Matthew Gedaro, B.S.B.A. 2019**, were married on Oct. 26, 2024.

⑥ **Anna Vierra, B.A. 2019**, married Michael Lorch, on June 28, 2025, at Our Lady of the Assumption Church in Turlock, Calif.,



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and now live in Stockton. During their honeymoon, they received the newlywed blessing from Pope Leo XIV on Aug. 20, 2025.

**Krishna Najjar, B.S. 2022**, and **Alexia Camacho, B.A. 2022**, were married on Oct. 10, 2025.

### Future Cardinals

**Steve Mariconti, B.M.E. 2007**, and **Caitlin (Weiss) Mariconti, B.M. 2007**, welcomed their fifth son, Nathaniel Carlo, on June 25, 2025. Nathaniel joins the boy crew of Stephen, Joseph, Theo, and Dominic Mariconti in Rochester, N.Y.

⑦ **Sarah (Tiufekchiev) Grieco, B.S. 2022**, and **Anthony Grieco, B.S. 2022**, celebrated the birth of their first child, Carmine Joseph. The family lives in Maryland. ♦



### ➡ Share your news

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# *In Memoriam*

- Frances R. Harpine**, B.S.N. 1946.  
**Norman Crabill**, B.A. 1949.  
**John T. Nolan**, B.A. 1951.  
**William F. Taylor**, B.S.Chem.E. 1953.  
**Barbara A. Dobrott**, M.S. 1956.  
**Rev. Henry Schreitmuller**, S.T.L. 1956.  
**Julius I. Bowen**, Ph.D. 1958.  
**Anne Carlet**, B.S.N. 1958.  
**Vincent W. Farley Jr.**, B.A. 1958.  
**Janet Ambrose**, B.M. 1960, M.M. 1966.  
**Rev. John Brenkle**, J.C.B. 1960, J.C.L. 1961.  
**George P. Canan**, B.A. 1960, M.A. 1961.  
**Marion I. Marano**, M.S. 1960.  
**Patrick J. McMahon**, B.M.E. 1960.  
**Anthony G. Roeder**, B.A. 1961.  
**Rev. Lawrence "Larry" J. Canavera**, B.A. 1962, M.A. 1963, M.A. 1971.  
**Peter Collins**, M.A. 1962, Ph.D. 1965.  
**Denis Curtin**, M.S. 1963, Ph.D. 1975.  
**Dena C. Feeney**, J.D. 1963.  
**Terrence A. Smart**, B.A. 1963.  
**James Ford Davidson Stone**, B.A. 1963.  
**Frank J. Suraci**, B.E.E. 1963.  
**Frances Anita Sessa Bryner**, B.A. 1964.  
**Yvonne A. Snow Cornell**, B.S.N. 1964.  
**Eamon J. Coughlin**, B.A. 1964.  
**John C. Holmes**, J.D. 1964.  
**Thomas H. Johnston**, B.A. 1964.  
**S. Joseph Meelan**, B.A. 1964.  
**Thomas A. Pugliese**, B.S.Chem.E. 1964.  
**Sister Mary Sharon Schmitz, R.S.M.**, M.S.N. 1964.  
**Margaret M. Allsup**, B.S.N. 1965.  
**Georgiann (Buratti) Errigo**, B.S.N. 1965.  
**Mary E. Frank**, M.A. 1965.  
**Sister Mary Kelly, O.S.F.**, M.S.N. 1965.  
**Mary E. May**, B.A. 1965.
- Rev. Ovidio Pecharroman**, S.T.L. 1965.  
**Thomas Griffin**, M.A. 1966.  
**Rev. Joseph J. McLaughlin**, B.A. 1966.  
**Victor R. Tulli Sr.**, B.S. 1966.  
**Kathleen F. Foley**, M.S.N. 1967.  
**John C. Long Jr.**, B.A. 1967.  
**Linda A. Manuszak**, B.A. 1967.  
**Nancy Moran**, B.A. 1967.  
**Edith Summerlin**, M.S.N. 1967.  
**Richard V. Cosentino**, B.A. 1968.  
**Charles Harkins**, J.D. 1968.  
**Catherine B. Kernan**, B.A. 1968.  
**Rev. Kevin E. Mackin, O.F.M.**, S.T.L. 1968, S.T.D. 1971.  
**JoAnne Marie Roche**, M.S. 1968.  
**Peter A. Thrift**, B.A. 1968.  
**Elizabeth C. Gray**, M.A. 1969.  
**Eugene Joseph McGlynn Jr.**, B.E.E. 1969.  
**Sister Marie Geraldyn McGreevy, R.S.M.**, M.A. 1969.  
**Paula F. Verson**, B.A. 1969.  
**Rev. Francis J. Cavoto, T.O.R.**, B.A. 1970.  
**Rev. Donald J. Fitzsimmons, C.S.V.**, M.A. 1970.  
**Valerie Kellogg**, M.F.A. 1970.  
**Patricia A. Berg Kelly**, B.A. 1970, M.A. 1971, Ed.D. 1984.  
**Rev. Kenneth R. Knapp**, M.S.W. 1970.  
**Robert M. Baker**, B.M.E. 1971.  
**James M. Madden**, B.A. 1971.  
**Rev. James P. Madden, C.S.C.**, M.A. 1971.  
**Charles J. McAllister**, B.A. 1971.  
**Nicholas C. Nicholas**, Ph.D. 1971.  
**Arlene Peterson**, M.S. 1971.  
**Carolyn N. Peterson**, M.S.N. 1971.  
**John Beard**, B.A. 1972.  
**Sister Doris Regan, O.P.**, M.A. 1972.  
**Edward S. Claypoole**, M.S. 1973.  
**Marcia Kaplin**, M.S.W. 1973.
- Van D. Knauss**, D.M.A. 1973.  
**Charles Lasher**, Ph.D. 1973.  
**Eugene J. Sullivan**, Ph.D. 1973.  
**Anthony J. Swetz**, B.A. 1973.  
**Rev. Stephen J. Juli**, B.A. 1974, S.T.B. 1980, S.T.D. 1991.  
**Christine Kavanaugh**, B.A. 1974.  
**Paul A. Lafranchise**, B.A. 1974.  
**Daniel J. Moore**, B.A. 1974, M.A. 1975, J.D. 1980.  
**Margaret A. Talarico**, B.A. 1974.  
**Debra J. Borkovich**, M.M. 1975.  
**Patricia Carmody**, B.M. 1975, M.M. 1980.  
**Scott A. Smith**, J.D. 1975.  
**Rev. Michael J. Troha**, B.A. 1975, M.A. 1976.  
**Michael Bowman**, M.A. 1976.  
**John F. Cahalane**, M.S.W. 1976.  
**Gary Henman**, D.S.W. 1976.  
**Ann M. Lynott**, M.S.N. 1976.  
**Carol Stern**, M.S.N. 1976.  
**William Webber**, M.S. 1976.  
**William T. Newman Jr.**, J.D. 1977.  
**Sister Dorothy M. Niemann, S.C.S.N.**, M.S.N. 1977.  
**Robert Yarrington**, J.D. 1977.  
**Robert V. Hubbard**, M.A. 1978.  
**John D. Kuklish**, M.S.W. 1978.  
**Sister Grace Miller, R.S.M.**, M.A. 1978.  
**Michele C. Parker**, M.A. 1978.  
**Joan Renner**, Ph.D. 1978.  
**Janet M. Cuca**, M.A. 1979, Ph.D. 1989.  
**Linda B. Gross**, M.S.L.S. 1979.  
**Philip J. Moser**, M.S. 1979, Ph.D. 1982.  
**Rev. Kail C. Ellis, O.S.A.**, Ph.D. 1980.  
**Sister Patricia A. McGreevy, O.S.B.**, M.Ch.A. 1980, J.C.L. 1991.  
**Rev. W. Scott Brubaker**, M.Div. 1981.  
**Theresa Joyce**, B.S. 1981.  
**Stephen Connair**, Ph.L. 1983.

**Kathryn J. Flynn**, M.S.L.S. 1983.  
**Peter A. Srsic**, B.A. 1983, M.A. 1985.  
**Patricia Caputo Tarabocchia**, M.S.N. 1983.  
**Rev. Thomas J. Lehning**, Ph.D. 1985.  
**Norman C. Francis**, LL.D. 1986. (Honorary degree)  
**Margo R. Harper**, M.S.N. 1987.  
**Terry L. Etter**, J.D. 1989.  
**Jo Ann Harrison**, B.S.N. 1989.  
**Sister Jamie T. Phelps, O.P.**, Ph.D. 1989.  
**David Michael Grogan**, B.A. 1992.  
**Joellen (Monnelly) Mendoza**, B.A. 1992.  
**Priscilla Fothergill**, M.S.W. 1993.  
**Susan Hefter**, M.S.L.S. 1993.  
**Etta-Rae Blazar**, M.S.W. 1994.  
**Evelyn Small**, M.S.L.S. 1994.  
**Efthalia Walsh**, Ph.D. 1994.  
**Mary F. Kelly**, B.A. 2000.  
**Rev. Mark A. Mahoney**, J.C.L. 2002.  
**Rev. G. Fredrick Brucker**, J.C.L. 2005.  
**Natalia L. Melia**, B.A. 2005.  
**Andy S. Burt**, J.D. 2009.

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### Faculty/Staff

**Ernest Evans**, assistant professor of politics, from 1981 to 1988.  
**Rev. John E. Lynch, C.S.P.**, J.D. 1969, served for decades as a professor and administrator.  
**Joseph Francis O'Connor**, lecturer in the Department of Greek and Latin, from 2006 to 2019.  
**Lou Peri**, desktop engineer support specialist in Technology Services, for over 45 years.



### TRUSTEE EMERITUS REMEMBERED

**Most Rev. William F. Murphy**, bishop emeritus of Rockville Centre and trustee emeritus of The Catholic University of America, died March 26, 2026, at age 85.

The fourth bishop of the Diocese of Rockville Centre, he led the Church on Long Island for more than 15 years, emphasizing evangelization and pastoral leadership. In service to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), Bishop Murphy held numerous leadership and advisory roles, including a position on the board of directors, as well as service on the Administrative Committee and the Committee on Priorities and Plans, and his work with subcommittees focused on the Church in Latin America and health care. He also consulted on the Committee on the Catechism and the Committee on Migration, contributed to the Committee on International Justice and Peace, and previously chaired the Committee on Domestic Justice, Peace and Human Development.

In addition to his USCCB work, he served on the Board of Trustees for The Catholic University of America from 1998 to 2009 and then became a Trustee Emeritus in 2013.

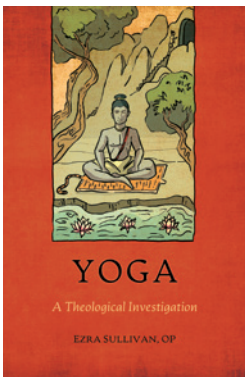
“Bishop Murphy’s theological gravitas, dedication to Pope St. Paul VI and Pope St. John Paul II in his work for the Holy See’s Pontifical Council for Peace and Justice, evangelizing ecclesial governance, international leadership in ecumenical and interfaith affairs, great capacity for friendship and mentoring, and championing of the Apostolate of the Catholic Laity in the public square made him a wise, insightful, and generous advocate for the mission of The Catholic University of America,” University President Peter Kilpatrick said in a statement to the Cardinal community.

He is remembered with gratitude for his service to the Church and enduring support of Catholic higher education. ♦

# What's on Your Reading List?

Some of the top reads from CUA Press in the last year — written by faculty and alumni.

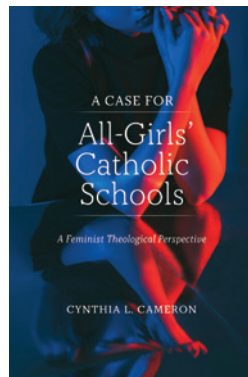
*The following summaries were provided by **John Martino**, executive editor, acquisitions for CUA Press.  
Learn more: [www.cuapress.org/books](http://www.cuapress.org/books)*



***Yoga: A Theological Investigation***

By Ezra Sullivan, O.P.

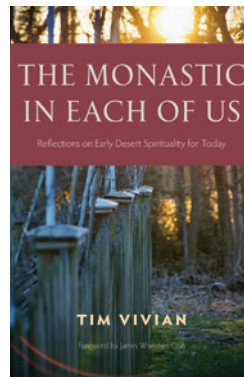
Everyone knows that yoga is great exercise, but can its roots in centuries-old Hindu religious practice pose spiritual problems for Christians? Dominican Ezra Sullivan thinks this question should be taken seriously and devotes an in-depth theological investigation to the varieties of yoga. What he finds may challenge yoga's Christian supporters and detractors alike. He also discusses Christian postures in prayer, rooted in the Dominican tradition.



***A Case for All-Girls' Catholic Schools: A Feminist Theological Perspective***

By Cynthia L. Cameron

What place do single-sex schools have in educating the anxious generation? To the social scientific discussion of this question, University alumna and former high school teacher Cynthia Cameron, M.A. 2007, adds a theological and feminist perspective on all-girls Catholic schools in particular. This leads her not only to make a contemporary case for the contribution of these schools but also to highlight the value and importance of girls in their adolescent years.



***The Monastic in Each of Us: Reflections on Early Desert Spirituality for Today***

By Tim Vivian

The Desert Fathers and Mothers — the first Christian monks — have often inspired awe and confusion. What can ancient men and women who chose to live with no one, nowhere, and with nothing have to say to us in our frenetic, connected world? Vivian brings a lifetime of learning and reflecting to deliver the illuminating answers. This book features a foreword by Benedictine Abbot and long-time University spirituality professor, James Wiseman.



***Catholic Pacifist: The Long and Lonely Quest of Gordon Zahn***

By Benjamin Peters

Alumnus Gordon Charles Zahn, M.A. 1950, Ph.D. 1953, was a Catholic pacifist before it was trendy. As a conscientious objector to World War II, he championed the “hidden life” of now-Blessed Franz Jägerstätter, who was killed for refusing to serve in Hitler’s army and became the subject of a Terrence Malick film. There’s no movie about Zahn’s own eventful career — yet! — so you’ll have to read the book ... or at least our Deep Dive on the next page.



W.J. Shepherd

## Deep-Dive: A Closer Read

William John Shepherd, university archivist and head of Special Collections at Catholic University, highlights key moments in the life of Gordon Zahn and offers insights to his impact on the American Catholic Peace movement.

A new book from CUA Press, *Catholic Pacifist: The Long and Lonely Quest of Gordon Zahn* (Benjamin Peters), studies the most significant and controversial pacifist in American Catholic history. Milwaukee-native Gordon Zahn (1918–2007) was a Catholic University alumnus in graduate studies under Monsignor Paul Hanly Furfey, whose “Supernatural Sociology” brought Catholic solutions to pressing social issues such as war, poverty, and racism. Author Benjamin Peters is professor of religious studies at University of Saint Joseph, Connecticut, and has written previously about the Catholic Worker movement — a cause closely affiliated with Zahn.

Zahn, baptized a Catholic at age 16 and a Milwaukee public school graduate, was one of only 135 official Catholic conscientious objectors (CO) in World War II, where he did compulsory and unpaid Civilian Public Service (CPS) from 1942 to 1946. This status was not recognized by the Church, who subscribed to the “just war” line of thinking that was dominant during that time. While confined to the work camps, Zahn became radicalized after meeting famed convert Dorothy Day, who was touring and reading the writings of Furfey, both members of the Catholic Worker Movement, who materially supported the inmates.

After discharge, Zahn graduated in 1949 and earned his graduate degrees from Catholic University in 1950 and 1953, respectively, with his thesis, *A Study of the Social Backgrounds of Catholic Conscientious Objectors in Civilian Public Service during World War II*, and dissertation, *A Descriptive Study of the Social Backgrounds of Conscientious Objectors in Civilian Public Service During*

*World War II*. Zahn was an activist in many peace movements, including Pax Christi and the Catholic Peace Fellowship (CPF), while also teaching sociology at Harvard, Loyola in Chicago, and University of Massachusetts in Boston. Additionally, he won prestigious research fellowships in Würzburg and the University of Manchester.

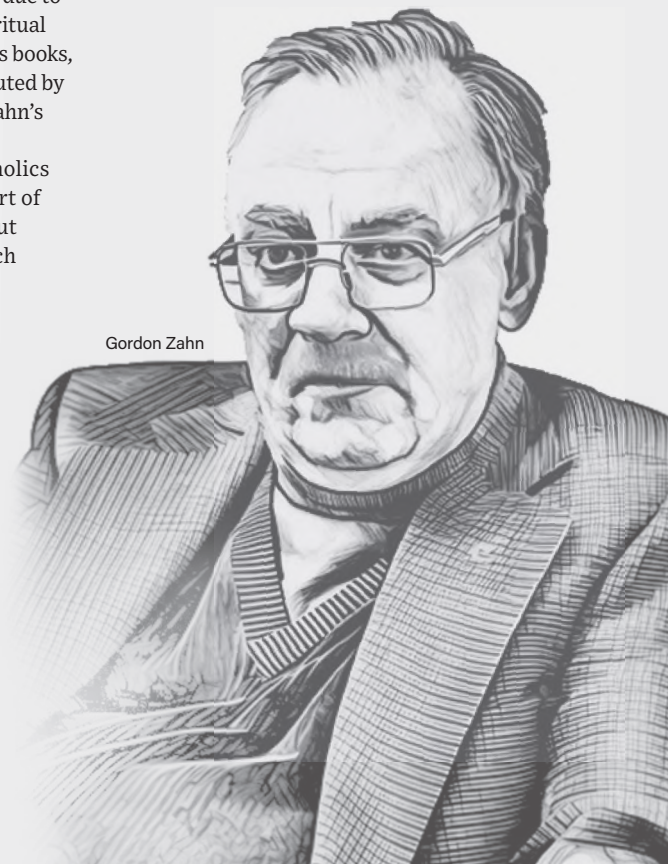
Zahn wrote a series of influential books studying the morally damning effect of war on society in Germany, Britain, and the United States. These include *German Catholics and Hitler’s Wars* (1962); *In Solitary Witness: the Life and Death of Franz Jägerstätter* (1964); and *The Military Chaplaincy: a Study of Role Tension in the Royal Air Force* (1969). He argued, echoing his mentor, Furfey, that church and public support of warring states, especially due to aerial bombing of civilians, was “spiritual bankruptcy.” The subject of one of his books, Jägerstätter, an Austrian man executed by the Nazis for refusing to fight, was Zahn’s hero-saint example for all humanity.

Zahn was criticized by non-Catholics for his opposition to abortion as part of his overall “dignity of life” belief, but he was influential on shifting Church views on war, reflected in the 1983 U.S. Bishops’ statement, *The Challenge of Peace*, which evolved from the just-war theory approach in World War I to a more nuanced one by the 21st century “forever wars,” drone strikes, and nuclear proliferation.

Zahn became widely recognized as the dean of American Catholic Peace movement, and in a well-

researched and crisply written biography, Peters effectively argues: whatever one’s belief on pacifism, Zahn made one of the most intellectually developed cases for it in terms that both Catholics and pacifists often found contradictory but difficult to ignore.

*NOTE: While Zahn’s archival papers are at Notre Dame University, his thesis and dissertation along with the papers of mentor Paul Hanly Furfey and fellow alumnus and sometimes critic George Gilmary Higgins are housed in Catholic University’s Special Collections. ♦*



Gordon Zahn



# American Dream

**When we convened our first concept meeting for this edition**, we had grand aspirations. This issue would focus on an “America at 250” theme — and there were so many stories we wanted to tell!

But with all that ambition and so much we could cover to encapsulate where we stand at this point in history as both a nation and a University, we needed to narrow down our scope. And that is what we bring to you within these pages.

As the daughter of a Northern Irish immigrant, this issue has particular value for me. When I look at my father and what becoming an American citizen has meant to him — opportunities to have an astronomy career and to join “the race for space” and contribute to NASA’s work exploring the universe — I am reminded of the dreams and possibilities the United States has offered to millions of people around the world since 1776.

And with The Catholic University of America’s story spanning 139 years of that 250-year timeframe, there are so many inroads to explore. Alongside the founders of the United States, the Catholic Church played an essential role in the Great Experiment, especially as she championed the freedom of religion. How that shaped national conversations, particularly in the space of higher education, was evident in the founding of the University in 1887, at the charge of Leo XIII.

This edition (being finite) can only cover a few of the top stories of Catholic University’s contributions to building up our country. Several others have been told in the impactful events this past spring — from the Center for the Constitution and the Catholic Intellectual Tradition’s April conference, “Endowed by Their Creator: Catholicism, the Declaration of Independence, and the American Experiment at 250” to the inaugural Leo Lecture that explored what it means to be fully Catholic and fully American. (See the QR code to watch the short.)

May one or more of our stories inspire you to pause, reflect on where our country and institution have been, and look with hope to where we are going. With God’s grace and in the ever-renewing life of our University, may that journey be one that is both faithful and free. ♦ — *Kathryn Mullan*



## Top Notch Rankings

In April 2026, Catholic University’s Columbus School of Law landed a new best-ever spot in *U.S. News & World Report*: **#70**.

This achievement builds on last year’s 23-place rise to #71 and reflects a sustained period of growth and momentum.

“We knew that the increased focus by *U.S. News* on student outcomes would continue to benefit our ranking because our graduates perform exceptionally well on the bar exam and in the job market,” said Stephen C. Payne, dean and Knights of Columbus Professor of Law. “We have also continued to improve the qualification metrics of our incoming classes, while at the same time growing enrollment and hiring faculty to maintain a low student-to-faculty ratio.”

As the school builds on this momentum, it remains dedicated to delivering a first-rate legal education grounded in its distinctive tradition, strengthened by its location in the nation’s capital, and committed to service in the profession and beyond.

Ranked

**#70**

**BEST LAW SCHOOL**

**COLUMBUS SCHOOL OF LAW**

U.S. NEWS AND WORLD REPORT 2026

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“Let us dare to  
read, think, speak,  
and write.”

– John Adams

“A Dissertation on the Canon and Feudal Law” (1765)