



ANGELUS



¡Confía!

Embrace trust

Tin Cậy

This is a special Religious Education Congress issue of Angelus, the weekly magazine serving the people of God in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. The magazine is part of Angelus News, a news platform that also includes a free daily newsletter, "Always Forward," a news website, www.angelusnews.com, as well as updates via Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.

Angelus News launched on July 1, transforming the 120-year-old Tidings into a multimedia platform. The magazine is the weekly print home for John L. Allen Jr. and his colleague, Inés San Martín. National voices like Ruben Navarrette, Kathryn Lopez, Grazie Pozo Christie and Mike Aquilina regularly contribute. Best-selling Catholic author Dr. Scott Hahn writes a weekly Scripture column. These voices complement key contributors such as Archbishop José H. Gomez, Bishop Robert Barron, Father Ronald Rolheiser and Heather King.

Through solid journalism, commentary and photography, we believe that Angelus can help our readers be more authentically Catholic.

Read more about our mission on pages 3 and 28.

ON THE COVER: Young Catholics hold up their cell phones during last year's Youth Day at the Religious Education Congress in Anaheim.

CONTENTS IMAGE: Liturgical movement during the closing Mass at the 2016 Congress.



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NEW WORLD OF FAITH

BY ARCHBISHOP JOSÉ H. GOMEZ

The ‘good tidings’ of Angelus

For more than 120 years, the family of God here in Los Angeles has been served by a fine Catholic newspaper, The Tidings.

With this edition, a fine newspaper becomes an even more excellent news magazine. The Tidings becomes Angelus, a weekly print publication integrated with online digital and social media platforms at AngelusNews.com.

“Tidings,” as we know, is an old word that means “news of events.”

In the first English Bible translations, the word is found in the Annunciation story, where the Angel Gabriel tells the Virgin Mary: “I am sent to speak to thee, and to bring thee these good tidings.”

Catholics remember this event in the traditional “Angelus” prayer. So our new name seems like a natural point of growth, especially when we recall that the first mission in Los Angeles was named for the angel of the Annunciation, San Gabriel.

Our mission remains bringing the “good tidings” of Jesus Christ to Los Angeles and the Americas — to communicate through words and images what Jesus reveals about God’s mercy and salvation and what that means for our lives and our society.

The Angelus scene points us to something fundamental. We believe in a God who “communicates.” A God who desires to speak to us in our own language. A God who calls us to dialogue, encounter and friendship. A God who invites us to walk with him and serve him and to live together with him in a communion of love.

Through Jesus and his Church, God is still speaking to his people. This is where Church communication begins — in the Church’s mission to spread the “good tidings” of Jesus Christ and his promise of God’s love.

To serve this mission, the Church has always created its own networks and communication platforms — publishing books, newspapers and magazines;

“Our mission remains bringing the ‘good tidings’ of Jesus Christ to Los Angeles and the Americas — to communicate through words and images what Jesus reveals about God’s mercy and salvation and what that means for our lives and our society.”

broadcasting over radio, television, cable and satellite; and now using the channels of digital and social media.

Today, more than ever, we need a vital and independent Catholic media presence.

We find ourselves in a highly secularized society, organized more and more deliberately as if God does not matter and as if people are beyond the need for religion. Sadly, most Catholics today get most of their news and information about their faith from secular sources that are hostile to the Church and deeply skeptical about “truth claims” of Christianity.

With Angelus we are hoping to announce a renewal of the Catholic press and the Catholic media in our time.

My hope is that this new magazine will become a platform for writers, photographers and artists who are serious about truth and beauty, prayer and spirituality, justice and the things that should matter most to us in our common life.

Our aim is to communicate a truly “Catholic” vision of the world by providing news and investigative reporting, and offering opinions and analysis on cultural trends and world events. We want to tell the stories of our Catholic people in all their rich diversity of cultures, languages and nationalities. We want to show our people’s struggles and joys as they seek

to live their faith and to make this world more like the way God created it to be.

At the heart of the Catholic vision is Jesus Christ’s “good tidings” about the human person — who is made in God’s image with a sanctity and dignity that can never be denied and a transcendent destiny and purpose given by God.

To be truly Catholic, our journalism must always serve and defend the human person, especially the poorest and most vulnerable — the child in the womb; the sick and the dying; the homeless, the refugee and the immigrant; the prisoner and all those who are enslaved, trafficked and persecuted.

We launched Angelus on July 1 because this marked the first celebration of the feast day of America’s newest saint, St. Junípero Serra, who was also one of the founders of Los Angeles and California.

St. Junípero was a great missionary and was one of this continent’s first “journalists.” He left us with rich and detailed reporting of his experiences among America’s first peoples, along with beautiful descriptions of plants, wild life and the natural environment. He wrote with moral fervor and compassion, defending women and children and speaking out for the rights of native peoples. He was probably the first person in the Americas to seek an end to the death penalty.

We invoke St. Junípero as our patron for Angelus and for the future of Catholic journalism and media.

Please pray for us as we embark on this new effort — and share the good news with others about what we are doing with Angelus.

I entrust all of us to Our Lady of Guadalupe, who brought the good tidings of Jesus to these lands at the dawn of the New World. May she inspire and guide us as we seek to bring these good tidings to a new generation in the Americas. ♦

This column originally appeared in the inaugural issue of Angelus, July 1, 2016.



To read more columns by Archbishop José H. Gomez or to subscribe, visit www.angelusnews.com.

'Embrace trust'

How encountering Christ is key to religious education

BY J.D. LONG-GARCÍA / ANGELUS

Religious education is about an encounter with Christ.

When asked specifically about young Catholics, Father Chris Bazyouros, who has been serving as the director of the Office of Religious Education for the Los Angeles Archdiocese for the last two years, says his approach often applies to all Catholics, young and old alike.

"People are going to come to us because they perceive that we have something that they really need," he says. "All of us are going to say, 'Of course, you need God!' But the rest of the world doesn't think that way."

So, Father Bazyouros says, the key is how catechists and other Catholics help others encounter Christ as a living person.

"And in so doing, give people a chance to think, to consider that this person — Jesus — also wants to be a part of their lives and can be relevant in their lives," he says.

Young adults are around, but are not being connected, he says. A young night is great, but it's just the beginning. Young adults want to be involved in service organizations and want to engage through their preferred methods of communication.

"There's a whole sense that we are being called to get out of what's comfortable for us and to seek out those people," Father Bazyouros says. "We are being called to be the apostles of today. The apostles didn't set up shop and wait for people to come by. They went where the people were. They saw what they were doing. They listened to their conversations and they said, 'I hear what you are saying, let

me talk to you about this.' They went where people gathered and brought this message of Christ."

Still, he says, it wasn't so much that the apostles knew what to say, but that they carried a "living faith." "And people were drawn to that living faith and said there's something happening here. I have to find out what it is," Father Bazyouros explains.

"It's really going to be the same with everyone. With youth and children, we need to also look into walking with their parents, but also walking with adults who are not married, or who are single who are trying to make their way into adulthood," he says, adding that they are "trying to find something that is meaningful. These sorts of things don't happen overnight. We gently offer an opportunity to be a part of something greater."

Offering that opportunity includes answering Pope Francis' call to be present to the marginalized.

"So going to the margins, going out to people who are hurting and suffering, that was always Jesus' mission," he says. "If we ever find ourselves asking 'What should we do?' Well, look at the mission of Jesus. The call to the margins is not new, but there's a renewed sense of urgency about doing it."

Pope Francis has been concerned that the Church is too inward looking and too comfortable, Father Bazyouros says. It's not a matter of waiting for people who are in need to show up asking for help.

"This call to the margin, we have to be careful that we don't dismiss it as being based on some political agenda, and we have to be careful not to forget

that it's based on the witness and teaching and life of Jesus and what he laid down for his disciples," he says. "It is what he wanted them to do."

Father Bazyouros, who in 2013 began working in the Office of Religious Education at the behest of former director Sister Edith Prendergast, RSC, says the office is seeing "a lot of amazing things" in its work.

"I feel that we're really at a key moment in our history as a Church, a time to make some important decisions about how we want to move forward into this new century," Father Bazyouros says. "If we're able to allow the Spirit to guide us in those decisions, we'll see amazing things happening. The work of evangelization, not just from Pope Francis but also from his predecessors, is continually coming up in our conversations. How do we encounter Christ?"

The only way to embrace trust, he says, is to encounter Christ.

"Embracing Trust," this year's Religious Education Congress theme, came about as all Congress themes do — when the ORE team prayed about the Sunday readings from Congress weekend. In the Gospel reading from Matthew, "Jesus says the birds of the air don't worry about what they are going to eat or wear, why should you?" Father Bazyouros says. "The whole sense of really completely putting all of your life into God's hands, which is always difficult for us, especially in difficult situations."

It's difficult to embrace trust for many who are uncertain about the future of the United States or who see the continuing war in Syria.



Archbishop José H. Gomez, Sister Helen Prejan, CSJ, and Father Chris Bazzyouros sit together before Sister Helen gave last year's keynote address Feb. 27 at the Religious Education Congress.

"We want to have some sense of control, or at least assurance that things are going to work out the way we hope they do," he says. "But to fully trust that if we completely put ourselves in God's hands, that how God wants things to come about will ultimately be best for everyone — that's tough."

Father Bazzyouros keeps a saying from St. Theodora Guérin, who founded the Sisters of the Providence of Mary-of-the-Woods, close to his heart. "Have confidence in the providence of God that so far has never failed us."

In the theme "Embracing Trust," Father Bazzyouros says he wasn't intentionally trying to promote a particular idea, "But I really don't believe in coincidences anymore." Trusting in God's providence is part of what the faith is all about.

"That complete abandon that we see in the life of Jesus, the abandonment

to God's providence that we see in our Blessed Mother Mary, and then ultimately all the saints and all those wonderful witnesses of faith, they've all taught us about this complete abandonment in God's hands."

Father Bazzyouros shared a couple of simple prayer tips he learned in the seminary that can be useful for others: "Pray as you can, not as you can't," and "Make time every day to pray."

"If you want to engage in a prayer life, the idea is that you engage in a prayer that connects to you on a deep level," he explains. "So if you enjoy reading Scripture, read Scripture. I mean, everyone should read it, but some enter into it more easily as a prayer practice. If you find great depth in the rosary, pray that. If you're a morning person, then get up early and pray. If you're a night owl, like me, your time is at night or some other time. Don't pray when you're really not there."

In ensuring daily prayers, Father Bazzyouros shares advice he'd received to put down prayer like an appointment.

"Put it on your calendar that this is your time for prayer, because if you look for it you'll never have it. But if you make time for it, you'll always have it there," he says. "I look at it like you have a standing time to call your mom — like every Wednesday night you call your mom. You make time for prayer because it's important for your relationship with God."

Prayer is an encounter and helps us carry the living God to others.

"Look back at the life of Jesus and meditate on part of his life," Father Bazzyouros says. "Read a passage from Scripture and see how he dealt with people. Listen to the way he treated them. Ask yourself if you were to meet someone, could you meet someone in the way Christ did? Can I meet someone and treat them like he did? And be with them like he did?" ♦



IN EXILE

BY FATHER RONALD ROLHEISER, OMI

Faith and fear

A common soldier dies without fear, yet Jesus died afraid. Iris Murdoch wrote this and that truth can be somewhat disconcerting. Why? If someone dies with deep faith, shouldn't he or she die within a certain calm and trust drawn from that faith? Wouldn't the opposite seem more logical — that is, if someone dies without faith shouldn't he or she die with more fear?

And perhaps the most confusing of all: Why did Jesus, the paragon of faith, die afraid, crying out in a pain that can seem like a loss of faith?

The problem lies in our understanding. Sometimes we can be very naïve about faith and its dynamics, thinking that faith in God is a ticket to earthly peace and joy. But faith isn't a path to easy calm, nor does it assure us that we will exit this life in calm, and that can be pretty unsettling and perplexing at times. Here's an example by the renowned spiritual writer Father Henri Nouwen.

In a book entitled "In Memoriam," he shares this story about his mother's death: Father Nouwen, a native of the Netherlands, was teaching in the U.S. when he received a call that his mother was dying back home in the Netherlands. On his flight home, from New York to Amsterdam, he reflected on his mother's faith and virtue and concluded that she was the most Christian woman he had ever known. With that as a wonderfully consoling thought, he fantasized about how she would die, how her last hours would be filled with faith and calm, and how that faith and calm would be her final faith-filled witness to her family.

But that's not the way it played out. Far from being calm and unafraid,

his mother, in the final hours leading up to her death, was seemingly in the grip of some inexplicable darkness, of some deep inner disquiet and of something that looked like the antithesis of faith. For Father Nouwen, this was very disconcerting. Why would his mother be undergoing this disquiet when, for all her life, she had been a woman of such strong faith?

Initially, this unsettled him deeply, until a deeper understanding of faith broke through: His mother had been a woman who every day of her adult life had prayed to Jesus, asking him to empower her to live as he lived and to die as he died. Well, seemingly, her prayer was heard. She did die like Jesus who, though having a rock-solid faith, sweated blood while contemplating his own death and then cried out on the cross, anguished with the feeling that God had forsaken him.

In brief, her prayer had been answered. She had asked Jesus to let her die as he did and, given her openness to it, her prayer was granted, to the confusion of her family and friends who had expected a very different scene. That is also true for the manner of Jesus' death and the reaction of his family and disciples. This isn't the way anyone naturally fantasizes the death of a faith-filled person.

But a deeper understanding of faith reverses that logic: Looking at the death of Father Nouwen's mother, the question is not, "How could this happen to her?" The question is rather: Why wouldn't this happen to her? It's what she asked for and, being a spiritual athlete who asked God to send her the ultimate test, why wouldn't God oblige?

There's a certain parallel to this in the seeming doubts suffered by Mother Teresa. When her diaries were published and revealed her dark night of the soul, many people were shocked and asked: How could this happen to her? A deeper understanding of faith would, I believe, ask instead: Why wouldn't this happen to her, given her faith and her openness to enter into Jesus' full experience?

But, this has still a further complication: Sometimes for persons of deep faith it doesn't happen this way and instead he or she dies calm and unafraid, buoyed up by faith like a safe ship on stormy waters. Why does this happen to some and not to others? We have no answer. Faith doesn't put us all on the same conveyor belt where one dynamic fits all. Sometimes people with deep faith die, as Jesus did, in darkness and fear; and sometimes they die in calm and peace.

Elizabeth Kubler-Ross submits that each of us goes through five clear stages in dying — denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. Kathleen Dowling Singh suggests that what Kubler-Ross defines as acceptance needs some further nuance. According to Singh, the toughest part of that acceptance is full surrender and, prior to that surrender, some people, though not everyone, will undergo a deep interior darkness that, on the surface, can look like despair. Only after that do they experience joy and ecstasy.

All of us need to learn the lesson that Father Nouwen learned at his mother's deathbed: Faith, like love, admits of various modalities and may not be judged simplistically from the outside. ♦



Oblate of Mary Immaculate Father Ronald Rolheiser is a specialist in the field of spirituality and systematic theology. His website is www.ronrolheiser.com.



More than 35,000 gathered for last year's Los Angeles Religious Education Congress at the Anaheim Convention Center.



THE CRUX

BY HEATHER KING



LAWRENCE HO / REDCAT

Takao Kawaguchi, a Tokyo-based dancer, "reimagines" the avant-garde Butoh dance works of the late Kazuo Ohno during a performance at the REDCAT Theater in Downtown L.A.

Kazuo Ohno, Takao Kawaguchi and the art of Butoh

Recently I caught a mesmerizing dance performance at the downtown REDCAT Theater: “Takao Kawaguchi: About Kazuo Ohno - Reliving the Butoh Diva’s Masterpieces.”

Ohno (1906-2010) was one of the founders of the revolutionary dance form known as Butoh, an avant-garde discipline, often done in white body makeup, that arose from the ashes of World War II.

As defined by Ohno himself: “Basically, ‘butoh’ means to meander, or to move, as it were, in twists and turns between the living and the dead.”

To watch a YouTube video of Ohno is to be transported to a world that is leagues apart from the aggressive, brute athleticism that characterizes so much of our contemporary skating, gymnastics, modern dance and even ballet.

“The best thing someone can say to me is that while watching my performance they began to cry,” he once said. “It is not important to understand what I am doing; perhaps it is better if they don’t understand, but just respond to the dance.”

Ohno converted to Christianity as a young man and remained a fervent Southern Baptist for the rest of his life. During WWII, he served in the Japanese Army and was held for three years as a POW. For much of his professional career, he worked by day as a physical education teacher at a private Christian school in Yokohama, retiring at the age of 86.

“Kazuo Ohno’s World: From Without and Within,” a collection of his essays, reflections and aphorisms, is a fascinating read.

“An authentic expression only emerges when body and soul reach crisis point. Look closely at plants. When in blossom, flowers are petal-laden right to the very tip of their limbs. But take a look at your fingertips: they’re lifeless. If your dance is to come to life in the same way a flower

blossoms, then be flower-like. Look at trees! From the roots to the tip of their branches, they’re vibrantly expressive.”

When he was almost 70, he happened by chance upon a modern painting that jarred into consciousness the memory of having seen a performance, decades before, by the famed flamenco dancer Antonia Mercé (popularly known as “La Argentina”). “Admiring La Argentina,” which was developed in homage and first performed in 1977, became one of his most well-known pieces.

In “My Mother,” another of his signature dances, he wore a thigh-high romper with a ruffle down the back and carried a paper rose that functioned as an exquisitely sensitive antenna. Far from trying to hide his age, if anything, Ohno showcased it. Makeup clung to the crevices in his wrinkled face. His hands were gnarled, his back stooped, his arm skin crepey.

But there was nothing in his dance of willful repulsivity. “My intention in dressing as a woman onstage has never been to become a female impersonator, or to transform myself into a woman. Rather, I want to trace my life back to its most distant origins. More so than anything else, I long to return to where I’ve come from.”

The REDCAT performance was by Takao Kawaguchi, a Tokyo-based dancer who “reimagines” Ohno’s works in a way that is “itself an original.”

I arrived early with a friend to find the lobby awash in CalArts types and Kawaguchi himself, slithering silently about the floor in his underwear. I desperately wanted to use the ladies’ room, but was terrified of traversing the carpet lest he grab one of my legs and attempt to engage in a spontaneous interpretive dance.

But the performance itself was, as I said, mesmerizing. The stage was

dark save for a clothes rack holding Kawaguchi’s costumes. Between dances, he changed slowly, teased his hair, gathered himself, applied makeup.

He opened with “The Fetus Dream” sequence from “My Mother,” reprised an episode from “Dead Sea” to a scratchy recording of what sounded like a sung Latin Mass, and performed “Dream of Love,” again from “My Mother,” to Franz Liszt’s “Liebestraum.”

The effect was extraordinary. Slight, elfin and sharp-featured, he variously evoked Charlie Chaplin, Maria Callas and the Virgin Mary, sorrowing at the foot of the Cross.

“I wanted to learn from [Ohno] the inside, the soul of the dance,” Kawaguchi has said. His movements tapped into the shadowy subconscious memory of our time in the womb and of that time on the other end — eternity — about which, for now, we can only wonder.

For much of the performance, Kawaguchi wore translucent white tights. From the first piece, one of his knees was bleeding.

That small detail — that tiny red stain amid so much white — for me emblemized Butoh. That this man who in his dedication to craft was so willing to take a back seat to the master, who was so willing to suffer for his audience before even reaching the main stage, was tremendously moving.

“Before employing techniques,” Ohno observed in his later years, “the question of mind, spirit or life must be considered.”

He was referring to dance, but could just as well have been speaking of writing or painting or prayer.

“The more techniques are applied, the more they push aside what is crucial. I don’t need techniques to lead my life after death.” ♦



Pope Francis arrives for a meeting with 138 new bishops from around the world at the Vatican Sept. 18, 2014.

Pope Francis could face key choices on bishops in 2017

BY JOHN L. ALLEN JR. / ANGELUS

ROME — By now, we already know much of what's on Pope Francis' plate in 2017, including two confirmed trips — Fatima in May, and India and Bangladesh probably later in the year — and the likelihood of a couple more, one to Africa (perhaps Congo and South Sudan) and one to Latin America (beginning with Colombia.)

The pontiff will also make quick stops in Milan and Genoa inside Italy, meet bishops from around the world in Rome making ad limina visits, receive dignitaries and heads of state,

preside over the usual liturgies for Holy Week, continue meeting with his C9 council of cardinal advisers to wrap up an overhaul of the Roman Curia, and so on.

With Francis, however, it's often what you don't see coming that really tells the tale.

Trying to predict what this maverick pope will do is a fool's errand. Yet we can at least say that in 2017, he'll have the chance to continue doing something arguably more important than almost anything else in terms of fram-

ing his legacy and shaping culture in the Church, which is naming bishops.

As a longtime friend of mine who works in the Vatican likes to say, in the Catholic Church a good bishop can do an enormous amount of good, and a bad bishop can do an even greater amount of harm!

Bishops generally enjoy wide latitude to run their shops as they see fit — a point that's been given an exclamation point of late by the contrasting ways various bishops have chosen to implement the pope's document on the

family, “Amoris Laetitia.” As a result, perhaps no single thing any pope ever does is more consequential than the kinds of bishops he appoints.

We got another small but telling reminder on Jan. 4, when Francis replaced Bishop Fred Henry of Calgary in Canada with Bishop William McGrattan.

Henry is a hero to the strongly pro-life camp in the Church, among other things, because of his refusal to permit a government-backed vaccination program against a sexually transmitted disease in Catholic schools because he believed it promoted promiscuity, while McGrattan is seen as a more “Pope Francis” kind of bishop whose focus is generally on dialogue and cooperation over confrontation.

In keeping with Church policy, every one of the world’s more than 5,000 Catholic bishops is expected to submit a letter of resignation when he turns 75. It’s up to the pope whether to accept it, but 75 is generally the threshold at which thoughts of a transition begin to beckon.

In major Vatican positions, officials who are already past 75, or who will turn 75 in 2017, include:

- › Cardinal Francesco Coccopalmerio, Pontifical Council for Legislative Texts;
- › Cardinal Angelo Amato, Congregation for the Causes of Saints;
- › Cardinal Beniamino Stella, Congregation for Clergy;
- › Cardinal George Pell, Secretariat for the Economy;
- › Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi, Council for Culture;
- › Cardinal Lorenzo Baldisseri, Synod of Bishops; and
- › Bishop Marcelo Sánchez Sorondo, Pontifical Academy of Sciences/Social Sciences.

Honestly, the smart money is that

most will stay on the job. The pope has already openly confirmed Pell beyond his 75th birthday, and Coccopalmerio, Stella, Ravasi, Baldisseri and Sánchez Sorondo are all seen as his kind of guys.

The one to watch may be Amato, who is rumored to be on his way out, and who turns 79 in June. If Francis does replace him, that would leave only the Congregation for Bishops under Canadian Cardinal Marc Ouellet, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith under German Cardinal Gerhard Müller, and the Economy secretariat under Pell as major Vatican offices not led by figures either appointed by Francis or seen as broadly on the same page on most major issues.

Catholic liberals would probably vote for the 69-year-old Müller as the Vatican official they’d most like to see gone, given his track record of taking fairly tough positions on matters such as the Amoris debate.

On the other hand, Francis may think about it the way St. Pope John Paul II once thought about naming Cardinal Agostino Casaroli as his Secretary of State. The Polish pope knew he was going to make a strong anti-Communist push, and he wanted a man of détente to provide balance.

Doctrinally speaking, under Francis it’s sort of the other way around: He’s a pope of détente, and maybe he likes having a doctrine czar around inclined to be sure the baby doesn’t get tossed out with the bathwater.

In terms of prelates in dioceses around the world, here are a few big players already over 75 or who will cross that milestone in 2017:

- › Cardinal Laurent Monsengwo, Kinshasa;
- › Cardinal Donald Wuerl, Washington, D.C.;
- › Cardinal Wilfrid Fox Napier, Durban;

- › Cardinal Angelo Scola, Milan;
- › Cardinal Norberto Rivera Carrera, Mexico City;
- › Cardinal André Vingt-Trois, Paris;
- › Cardinal Oscar Rodríguez Maradiaga, Tegucigalpa;
- › Cardinal John Ton Hon, Hong Kong; and
- › Archbishop Peter Okada, Tokyo.

Once again, there’s no rule that says the pope has to replace any of them, and in fact most seem safe bets to go on for a while, prominently including Wuerl in Washington.

However, the drama of 2017 probably pivots on the possibility of a transition in three places: Durban, Mexico City and Milan.

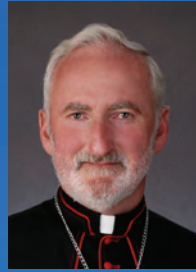
All three are tone-setting archdioceses for the Church on an entire continent, and they’re all places where the incumbent is conventionally seen as not quite the dictionary definition of a “Francis bishop.” Napier was a vocal part of the more conservative bloc at Francis’ two synods, Rivera is seen as an old-school cleric comfortable with power and privilege, and Scola is more of an evangelical “JPII” sort of thinker and leader.

If Francis were to do in Milan, Durban and Mexico City what he recently did with his cardinal picks in the U.S., meaning to elevate personalities clearly seen as in sync with his own outlook, it’ll likely be read as him nailing down his legacy in various parts of the world.

On the other hand, if he cuts in the other direction and names figures seen as more traditional or conservative, it might be taken as a gesture toward unity, trying to reassure those groups he still wants to be their pope, too.

There’s no way of knowing when, or if, these choices might come in the next 12 months. What’s certain is that whenever they do come, they’ll matter — and, given the nature of the Church, not just a little bit. ♦

To Jesus Through Mary



**Join Auxiliary Bishop David G. O'Connell
and Angelus' Kathryn Jean Lopez
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For more information, please visit www.bit.ly/Fatima17
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October 13, 2017 will mark 100 years since the final apparition of Our Lady of Fatima to Lucia Santos and her cousins Jacinta and Francisco Marto in Portugal. The Blessed Mother appeared to Bernadette Soubirous in 1858.

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WORD ON FIRE

By BISHOP ROBERT BARRON

Go in haste! Be amazed! Treasure!

By now most of you are probably aware of the depressing statistics regarding the “nones,” that is to say, those in this country who claim no religious affiliation. The most recent survey showed that now fully one-fourth of Americans belong to no religion at all — that’s approximately 80 million people. And among those in the 18-29 age group, the percentage of nones goes up to 40!

This increase has been alarmingly precipitous. Fifty years ago, only a fraction of the country would have identified as unreligious, and even a decade ago, the number was only at 14 percent. What makes this situation even more distressing is that fully 64 percent of young adult “nones” were indeed raised religious but have taken the conscious and active decision to abandon their churches. Houston, we definitely have a problem.

I have written frequently regarding practical steps that religious leaders ought to be taking to confront this rising tide of secularist ideology, and I will continue to do so. But for the moment, I would like to reflect on a passage from the Gospel of Luke, which was featured on the solemnity of Mary the Mother of God, and which sheds considerable light on this issue. It has to do with the visit of the shepherds to Mary and the Christ Child in the stable at Bethlehem, and it hinges on three words: haste, astonished and treasured.

We hear that, upon receiving the angel’s message, the shepherds “went in haste” to visit the holy family. This echoes a passage from a bit earlier in Luke’s Gospel: having heard the news of her own pregnancy and that of Elizabeth, Mary, we are told, “went in haste” to the hill country of Judah to help her cousin. The spiritual truth that both of these pericopes disclose is

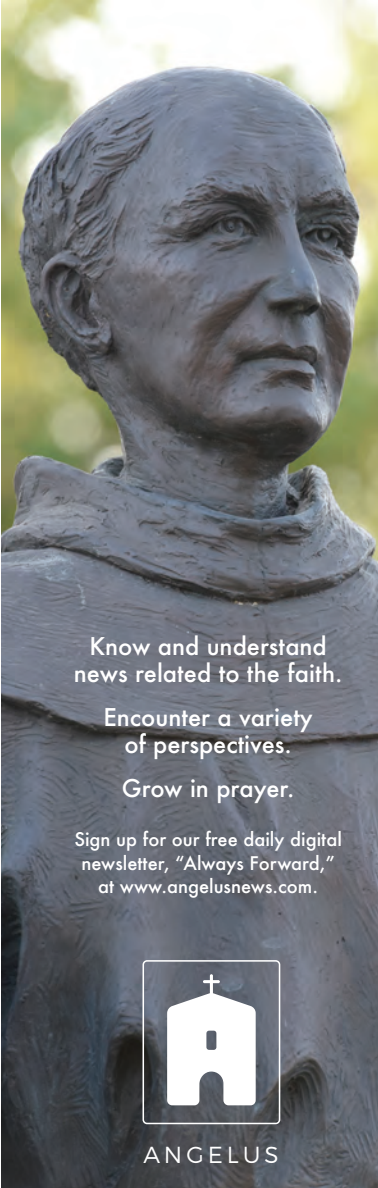
that energy, verve, enthusiasm and a sense of mission come precisely from a good that is perceived to be both objective and transcendent to the ego. If I might borrow the language of Dietrich von Hildebrand, it is only the objectively valuable — as opposed to the merely subjectively satisfying — that fills the mind and soul with passion and purpose.

When the sense of objective and transcendent value is attenuated — as it necessarily is within the context of a secularist worldview — passion and mission fade away. Cardinal John Henry Newman said that what gives a river verve and movement is precisely the firmness of its banks. When those banks are broken down, in the interest of a supposed freedom, the once energetic body of water spreads out into a great lazy lake. What we have in our secularist culture, which denies the transcendent good, is a subjectivism that gives rise to the “whatever” attitude. Toleration and self-assertion reign supreme; but no one goes anywhere in haste. Rather, we all rest on our individual air mattresses in the midst of the placid but tedious lake.

The second word I want to emphasize is “astonished.” Luke tells us that those who heard the shepherds’ testimony were “astonished” at the news. The King James Version renders this as “they wondered at” the message. Wonder, amazement and astonishment happen when the properly transcendent power breaks into our ordinary experience. The findings of the sciences delight and inform us, but they don’t astonish us, and the reason for this is that we are finally in control of the deliverances of the scientific method. We observe, we form hypotheses, we make experiments, and we draw conclusions.

Again, this is all to the good, but it

ALWAYS FORWARD




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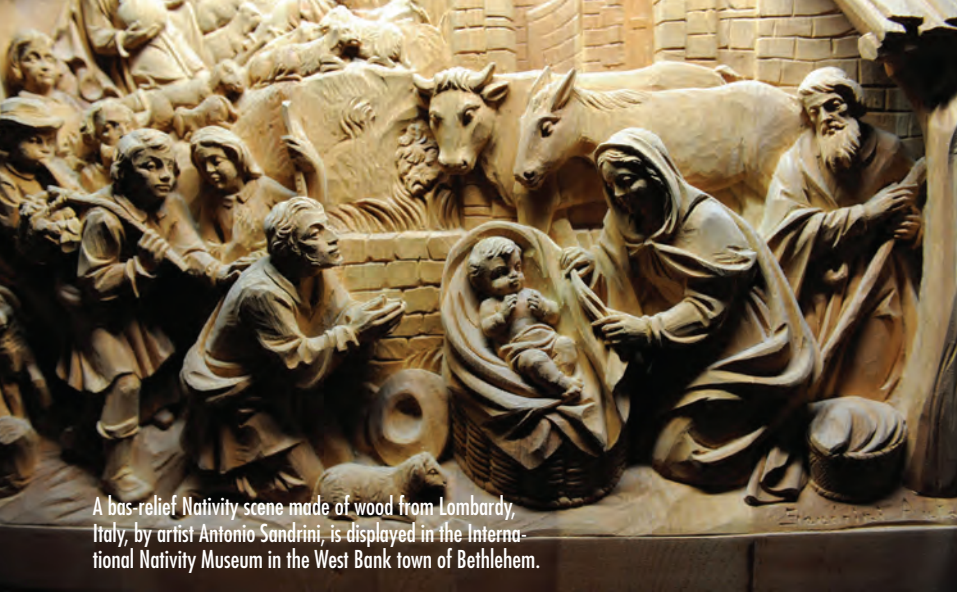
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ANGELUS



A bas-relief Nativity scene made of wood from Lombardy, Italy, by artist Antonio Sandrini, is displayed in the International Nativity Museum in the West Bank town of Bethlehem.

doesn't produce amazement. Dorothy Day witnessed to the astonishing when she said, upon the birth of her first child, that she felt a gratitude so enormous that it would correspond to nothing or no one in this world. Mother Teresa was properly amazed when, on a lengthy train journey to Darjeeling, she heard a voice calling her to minister to the poorest of the poor. The apostles of Jesus fell into wonder when they saw, alive again, their master who had been crucified and buried. These are the most precious kinds of experiences that we can have, and if St. Augustine is right,

they alone can satisfy the deepest longing of the heart. A secularist ideology — the worldview embraced by the “nonés” — produces the clean, well-lighted space of what we can know and control. But it precludes true astonishment, and this leaves the soul impoverished.

The final word from Luke upon which I'd like to reflect is “treasured.” The evangelist tells us that Mary “treasured these things, pondering upon them in her heart.” Cardinal Newman said that Mary, precisely in this contemplative, ruminative frame of mind, is the model of all theology.

I'd press it further. She is the real symbol of the Church in its entire function as the custodian of revelation. What is the Sistine Chapel? What is Notre Dame Cathedral? What is The Divine Comedy of Dante? What is the “Summa Contra Gentiles” of Thomas Aquinas? What are the sermons of John Chrysostom? What are the teachings of the great ecumenical councils? What is the liturgy in all of its complexity and beauty?

These are all means by which the Church stubbornly, century in and century out, treasures the astonishing events of God's self-manifestation. Up and down the ages, the Church ponders what God has done so that the memory of these mighty deeds might never be lost. As such, she performs an indispensable service on behalf of the world — though the world might not have any sense of it. She keeps holding up the light against the darkness.

So to the “nonés” and to those who are tempted to move into secularism, I say, don't float on the lazy lake; rather, go in haste! Don't settle for something less than astonishment; be amazed! Don't fall into spiritual amnesia; treasure! ♦

Bishop Robert Barron is an auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles and the founder of Word on Fire Catholic Ministries.

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RENDERING BY ANDREW NORMAN

PRISON ON PAROLE

Juvenile halls, mental illness, harsh sentences:
A closer look at overcrowded penitentiaries in California

BY R.W. DELLINGER / ANGELUS

Man, it was cold in this stinking holding tank, right off a yard. Barely 9 a.m., and it already reeked of urine. Goose bumps were popping up through the tattoos running down his arms. Still, Ironwood in 2012 was nothing like the 15 freakin' years he spent in solitary in the secure housing unit hellhole, that damn SHU, at Pelican Bay.

David Amaya was telling himself to stay focused. This was his third parole hearing after serving 20-plus of his 15-to-life for what the news people called “gang-related” crimes. He had to calm down, and fast, waiting for another turn before the parole board. Which wasn't no board by any definition. Just one commissioner and his deputy. OK, those two's recommendation had to be approved by the 12-member full board in Sacramento, and then the governor, right? But still, it was in their hands whether he went home to his wife and three daughters or stayed behind bars.

Jerry Brown and his people liked to point out on TV how they were trying like hell to meet that federal mandate of reducing California's prison population. Although, they also scoffed at the notion that triple-bunking in hallways constituted cruel and unusual punishment. These were state prisons, they liked to point out, not Holiday Inns! Yeah, OK, so they didn't have guys, you know, sleeping in shifts anymore. At least not at Ironwood.

But what those restorative justice folks and civil rights lawyers referred to as “mass incarceration” was still happening. Guys like him serving hard time were being denied parole every time it came up. And juvenile halls were still serving as bush leagues, you know, to places like Folsom, San Quentin and Pelican Bay. Pipelines to the bigtime.

Damn! The corrections officer was opening the door now and his palms were sweating. Not like at the first two hearings, but ...

David Amaya served 25 years
in California prisons.



David Amaya spent 15 years in solitary confinement at Pelican Bay's SHU (Secure Housing Unit).

He told himself to man up. But don't show no body language that could be misinterpreted. At least he wasn't wearing shackles or hand-ties like they made some of those poor bastards do. Walk in there straight and tall. Show them you were a changed person like you knew you were. And, man, watch your mouth. Don't say nothin' wrong.

A wood table and chairs. Can't-see-through mirror there on the wall, with more guards behind it checking out every time you picked your nose. Don't stare into it! Stay focused, man. Tell them what you've told yourself a hundred times. You weren't the same person who did all that violence. Hadn't you found God? Wasn't that changing everything?

He sat down beside his lawyer, half-smiling, not overdoing it, shaking hands. The commissioner and his deputy right across from them, practically face-to-face. They wanted to see into your eyes, right down to your very soul. Was that possible?

Also just like before, no victim fami-

The lifer told himself to walk into the parole hearing like the changed person he really was.

lies' members here this morning. Ironwood was so freakin' isolated out here in the Sonoran Desert, no wonder.

Made him wonder how they were doing. Years before he'd seen 9/11 on television, the stupid newsmen interviewing families after the towers fell. Kinda got to him, seeing how deep they were hurting. But, hey, hadn't he caused the same pain to families? Something he never gave any thought to before.

After stating for the record, and recorder, who was present and their titles, they listed his crimes: manslaughter, attempted manslaughter and great bodily harm.

Right off, they wanted to know if he killed those three guys. Did he intend to? Why? What were the reasons behind his actions?

He said he did two members of his own gang for doing stuff they shouldn't have been doing. The other guy was a whole different thing. He'd been giving him a look right on the street while he was driving by with his homies. So he jumped out, got in his face.

"Are you sorry? What does remorse mean to you? How do you show remorse? And what would you say to the victims if you had the opportunity to talk to them or their families?" the commissioners asked, coming at him pretty hard, like always.

"Yes, I'm very sorry, especially for that guy on the street. He didn't deserve that. I was just a coward back then. I couldn't accept the fact that somebody was standing up to me. And I was more concerned about what everybody was gonna think, my homies. I felt, you know, disrespected.

THE PIPELINE

Jesuit Father Mike Kennedy is co-chaplain of Barry J. Nidorf Juvenile Hall in Sylmar. He also founded and directs the Jesuit Restorative Justice Initiative. The team ministers to inmates in state and federal prisons, while advocating for systemic changes in criminal justice.

The 68-year-old Jesuit believes the school-to-juvenile-hall-to-prison "pipeline" continues to feed mostly young, poor minorities into California's 34 penal institutions.

"Our urban public schools are jungles because they're all gang and drug infested," says Father Kennedy. "Very few get to be juniors or seniors in high school because they're now on crystal meth or something else. So they don't go to school and then they drop out."

And many start hanging with their neighborhood gang for self-protection, with their next life stop being a Los Angeles County juvenile camp or hall.

"We put them together with other

gang members, which only makes it worse," he points out. "So probably the hardest place to change is really in juvenile hall and many wind up eventually in state prison. So basically that's the paradigm."

Father Kennedy acknowledges how conditions have recently improved in the prisons his team visits up and down the state. He remembers how even six years ago inmates were sleeping in gyms. But he also reports that many — especially Level IV or maximum security institutions — are still overcrowded, with inmates waiting for weeks or months to enroll in self-help programs and education courses.

The priest agrees with Russian writer and philosopher Fyodor Dostoyevsky that a society's civilization can be judged by entering its prisons. "The important people are

people who go to Harvard and go to Princeton," he says. "The people who live in barrios and ghettos and never have a first chance, they're disposable and invisible."

"Our criminal justice system is punitive: 'You deserve it! You are a bad person! We don't believe in redemption! We're going to treat you bad because you should be punished! We can't trust you!'"

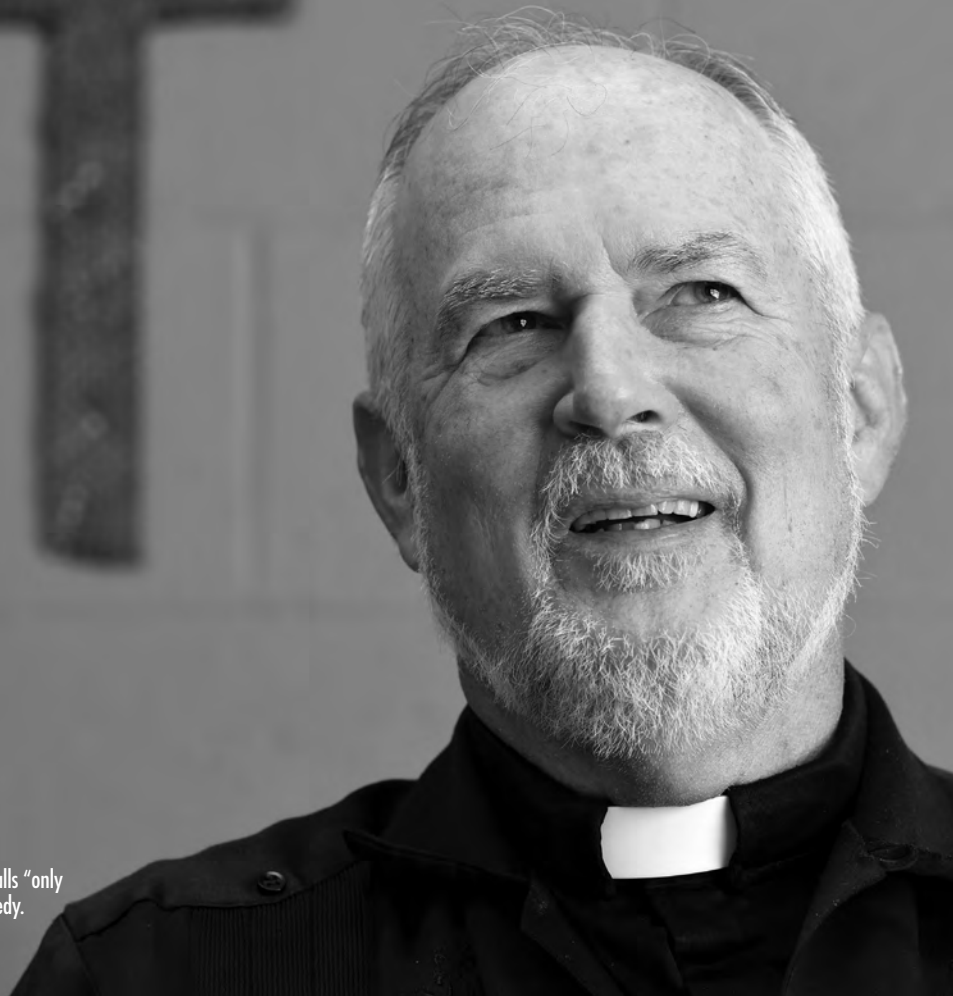
"Yeah, it's pretty much all those things," he sums up. "And as a result, it's a self-fulfilling prophesy. They see themselves after a while as that. They don't see themselves as good people."

But the Church says they are.

"You know, Jesus said the people who had been forgiven the most, love the most," reminds Father Kennedy. "It's true! Because Jesus is right. They're the locus, the place of God. I mean, that's the crucifixion. The darkest place in history had the most light. That is our basic faith. But we kind of skip over that."

"No, you just meet amazing people inside, and some of them have done very horrible things," he adds. "I never underplay that." ♦

— R.W. Dellinger



Putting gang members together in juvenile halls "only makes things worse," says Father Mike Kennedy.

CALIFORNIA'S 10 MOST CROWDED PRISONS*

INSTITUTION	INMATES	DESIGN CAPACITY	PERCENT OVER
Valley State Prison	3,413	1,980	172.4%
Wasco State Prison	4,942	2,984	165.6%
Calipatria State Prison	3,762	2,308	163.0%
High Desert State Prison	3,724	2,324	160.2%
Kern Valley State Prison	3,910	2,448	159.7%
Centinela State Prison	3,636	2,308	157.5%
California Substance Abuse Treatment Facility	5,345	3,424	156.1%
North Kern State Prison	4,153	2,694	154.2%
Correctional Training Facility	5,084	3,312	153.5%
California State Prison, Los Angeles County	3,503	2,300	152.3%

*Weekly report of population as of midnight July 27, 2016. Data Analysis Unit, Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, State of California. In 2011, a U.S. appellate court ruled that California's prisons house no more than 137.5 percent of the number of inmates they were designed to hold. Anything above this figure, according to the federal panel, violates the eighth amendment's prohibition against "cruel and unusual punishment."

Because in my mind, at the time, you're gonna fear me and you're gonna respect me. But he was just a regular guy."

After catching his breath, he said, "What would I tell victims and their families? I'd tell them, you know, I really regretted what happened. They didn't deserve to die that way. Nobody does."

Amaya was sent back to the foul-smelling holding tank while they deliberated.

"Of course I wanted to come home, you know, and I thought I did a good job," he told me at the Southern California transitional house he'd been living at for a year, working steady at a flooring warehouse. "But in all honesty, I realized I still needed more work in myself. I just needed a little more time."

When he was called back into the hearing room after 30 minutes, the commissioner and his deputy agreed. Yet, at the same time, they seemed supportive, which really caught him off guard.

"They saw it was still too early, but they were actually good to me," he said. "Where before they'd called me a monster, which I was. I looked at it like I became that person that was very violent when I started [gang] bangin'. I was terrorizing the street, you know. And my interpretation of respect was 'fear me!'"

The commissioners needed to know Amaya wasn't blowing smoke — that when they released him, he was going to go straight.

"And now they were actually saying, 'You know what? We see the change in you. We know you're not the same person. But we need to know you're not blowing smoke. We need to understand and see that when we release you, you're not going to go out there and get involved in the same kind of activity.'"

"I took it as constructive criticism; I wasn't really mad," he recalled. "No, I was more concerned for my family — my wife, my kids. What was it gonna do to them? How would it impact them? The denial."

After a moment, Amaya added, "I knew I had ruined so many lives. I knew I had hurt a lot of people. And I looked at it as, 'OK, this is something I have to go through right now.' And I couldn't allow myself to get pissed or turn it into anything else. I had my daughters to think about. Our visits were always behind glass. And I

PROP. 57

The California Catholic Conference of Bishops came out in full support of Proposition 57: The Public Safety and Rehabilitation Act, calling the measure a "much needed first step," which would create a "balanced approach to the criminal justice system."

The proposition appeared on the November 2016 ballot. Voters in California approved Prop 57 by a margin of 64 percent vs. 36 percent.

Proponents said the measure will offer alternatives for dealing with crime, including increasing public safety as a preventative measure, offering rehabilitation programs and placing more decisions in the hands of impartial judges. The measure also increases the chance of parole for nonviolent offenders.

In addition, the initiative allows the juvenile court — those who best understand young people — to decide if a minor should be tried as an adult. ♦

A FAMILY VISIT

Two years ago the Prison Policy Initiative reported that less than a third of people in U.S. state prisons got a visit from a loved one in a typical month.

"Despite the breadth of research showing that visits and maintaining family ties are among the best ways to reduce recidivism, the reality of having a loved one behind bars is that visits are unnecessarily grueling and frustrating," wrote the authors of "Separation by Bars and Miles: Visitation in state prisons."

Sandra Sheridan can attest to that.

On June 25, the 70-year-old

grandmother visited her daughter, Terese, in Folsom Prison for the first time in 2 1/2 years. With her was her 18-year-old grandson, Ta'Reek, her daughter's son whom she has raised. The eight-hour overnight journey from South L.A. was made possible by "Get On The Bus," which brings children, along with their guardians, from throughout California to visit their parents in prison.

"It means a lot to families who cannot afford any type of transportation to these faraway prisons," Sheridan pointed out. "This was the first time we've seen her in over two years. It was awesome for my grandson to spend time with her. Because, see, that was the first time he got to touch and

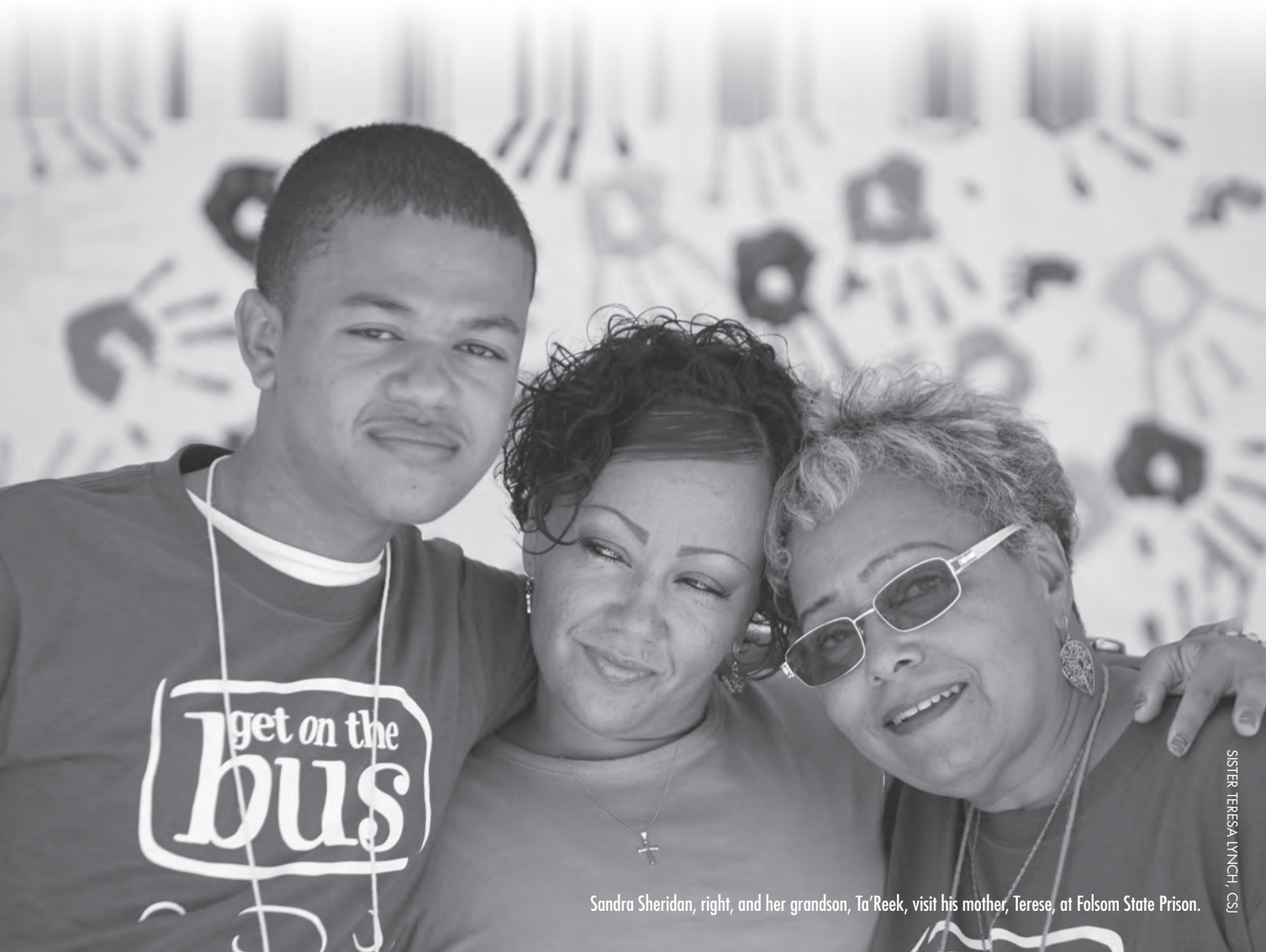
hug his mother. He had visited her at other places, but she was always behind glass."

The yearly trips offer healing to both kids and their incarcerated dads and moms, according to Get On The Bus' executive director.

"It's crucial because the children need to know that parents love them, they don't feel abandoned, they don't feel neglected," explained Amalia Molina. "That's very important. And the parents know that they have children and they want to change for the best.

"So Get On The Bus heals the children, heals the parents. It communicates love." ♦

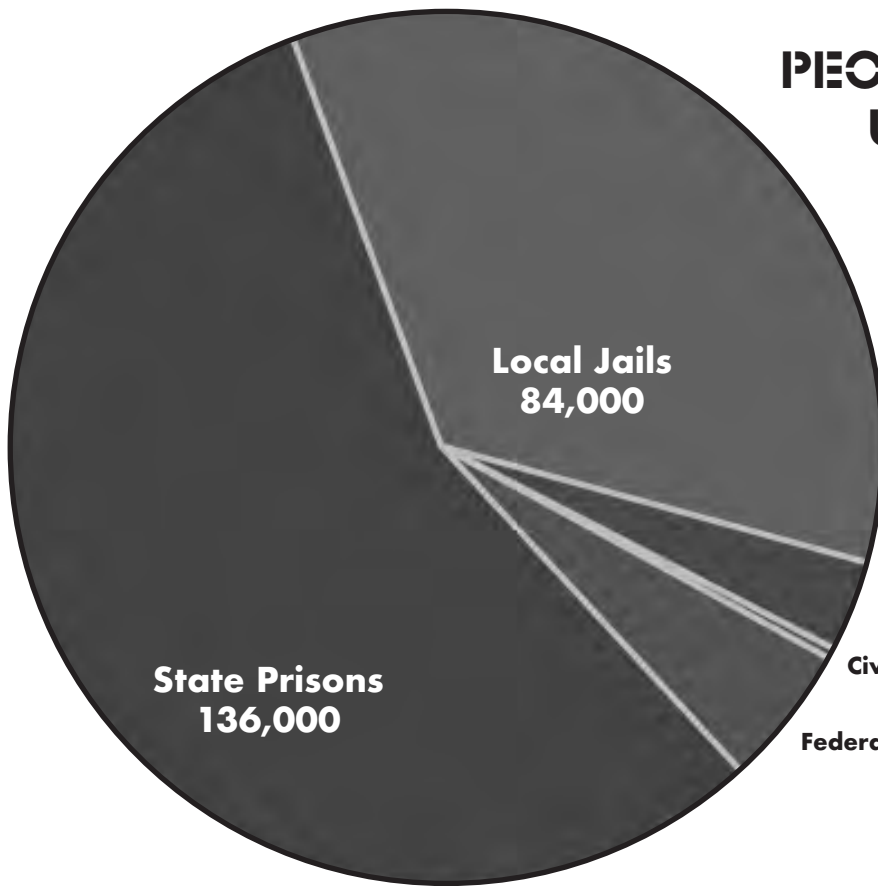
— R.W. Dellinger



Sandra Sheridan, right, and her grandson, Ta'Reek, visit his mother, Terese, at Folsom State Prison.

HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE LOCKED UP IN CALIFORNIA AND WHERE?

242,000 people in California are locked up in various kinds of facilities



PRISON POLICY INITIATIVE 07/20/2016

remember it was specifically October of 2005. Adriana was 15 and she asked, ‘Dad, are you ever gonna hold me?’ “So that was the fork in the road where I had to make a decision,” said the 48-year-old with the Mr. Clean shaved head and shoulder muscles. “But it didn’t happen overnight.”

In August 2009, a three-judge court addressed the triple-bunking overcrowding David Amaya was referring to. That’s when the federal jurists ordered the California prison system to reduce the inmate population of 150,000 by 40,000 within two years.

On May 23, 2011, in *Brown v. Plata*, the U.S. Supreme Court affirmed that decision to cut the state prison population to 137.5 percent of design capacity — what the institutions were built to hold.

Michael Bien was co-lead counsel in lawsuits to force the state to lessen overcrowding in its prisons. Not only did he describe in court a chaotic system where prisoners were sleeping in gyms, hallways and day rooms with single guards trying to monitor them. He also pointed out cases where sick

inmates had died when they didn’t get proper medical treatment. Along with the lack of psychological help mentally ill inmates were receiving.

“In these overcrowded conditions, inmate-on-inmate violence is almost impossible to prevent, infectious diseases spread more easily and lockdowns are sometimes the only means by which to maintain control,” the panel had concluded. “In short, California’s prisons are busting at the seams and are impossible to manage.”

The original ruling had legs all the way to the highest court in the land. And on Jan. 29, 2015, a local newspaper headline proclaimed, “California prisons dip below court-ordered population cap.” The story’s lead sentence reported that the Golden State’s beleaguered penal system fell under the federal courts’ mandatory inmate count for the first time. But the last 15 words contained the real rub: “a benchmark the state will have to be maintained to satisfy judges overseeing the agency.”

And 17 prisons, including most of the Level IV maximum security facilities, were still overcrowded to the point of

causing cruel and unusual punishment.

“It was a big milestone,” Bien, the San Francisco lawyer, acknowledged about reaching the cap. “But it doesn’t mean everything is fixed. What’s important is to realize that they’re barely there. [137.2 percent then vs 137.5 percent mandated]”

“Moreover, many individual institutions are still way above that average. [see California’s 10 Most Crowded Prisons chart, page 14]. And the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation has ‘population projections’ showing prison populations are starting to go up again.”

When the federal court granted its last extension to the state, it also called for a “durable remedy.” This could be an automatic release of prisoners or some other mechanism in place to keep the inmate count under the 137.5 percent benchmark. And by the way, he cautioned, that figure didn’t fall from heaven. It wasn’t even a real compromise.

It was just the appellate court’s best guess of how much overcrowding constitutes “cruel and unusual punishment” according to the eighth

'SCAPEGOATS'

"Any society, any family, which cannot share or take seriously the pain of its children and views that pain as something normal or to be expected is a society 'condemned' to remain a hostage to itself, prey to the very things which cause that pain."

In September 2015, Pope Francis spoke those words to inmates during his visit to the Curran-Fromhold Correctional Facility in Philadelphia. In Spanish, he told the captive congregation, "I am here as a pastor but, above all, as a brother to share your situation and to make it my own."

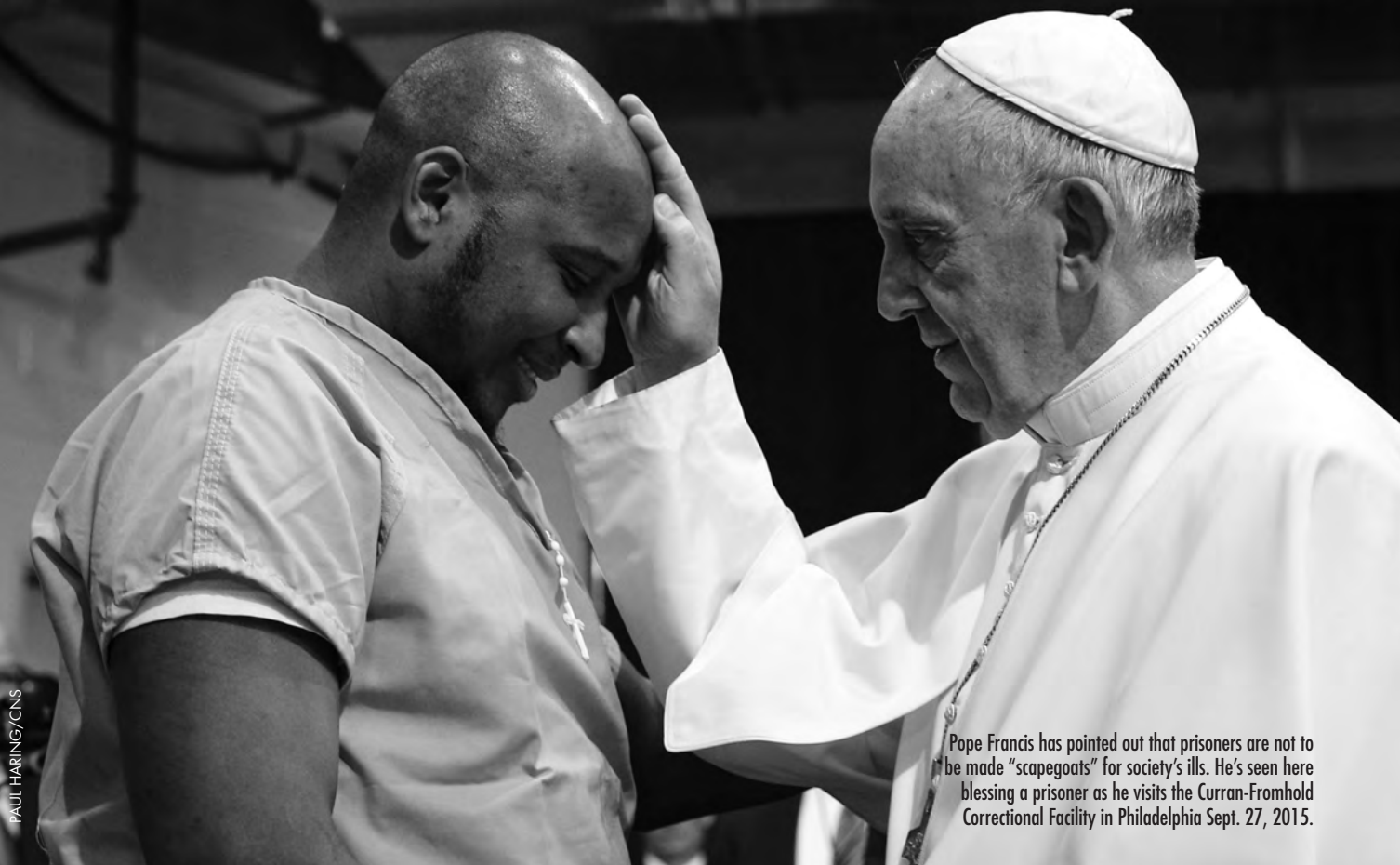
In doing so, the pope addressed the issue of mass incarceration, a topic he hasn't shied away from. Through words and actions, he has often declared that it's a sacred Christian belief to treat pris-

oners with respect and mercy.

In 2014, addressing the International Association of Penal Law, Pope Francis warned against the modern practice of locking members of society up for lengthy periods.

"A widespread conviction has taken root in recent decades that public punishment can resolve the most disparate social problems, as if completely different diseases could be treated with the same medicine," he pointed out.

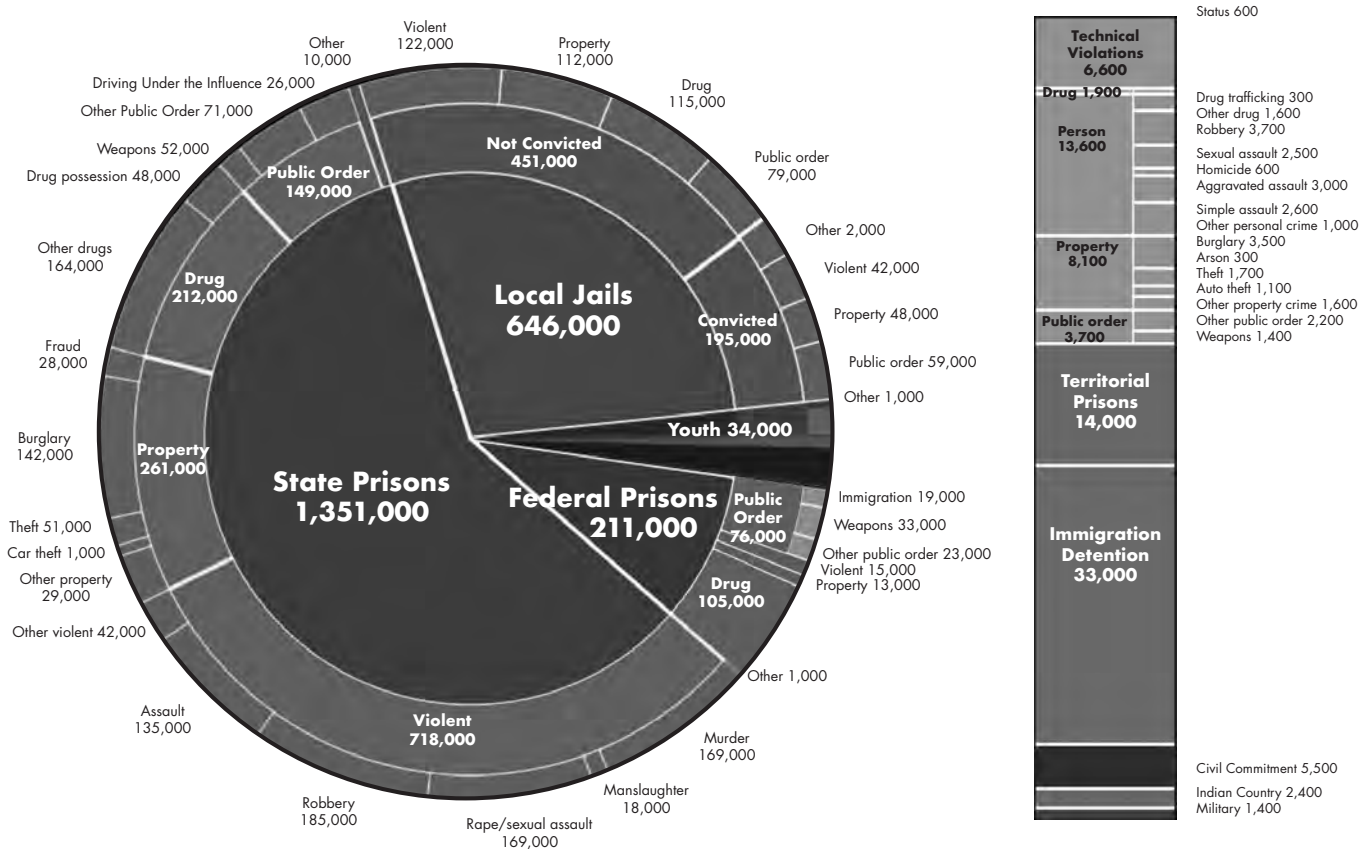
The pope added, "Scapegoats are not only sought to pay, with their freedom and with their life, for all social ills such as was typical in primitive societies, but over and beyond this, there is at times a tendency to deliberately fabricate enemies — stereotyped figures who represent all the characteristics that society perceives or interprets as threatening." ♦



Pope Francis has pointed out that prisoners are not to be made "scapegoats" for society's ills. He's seen here blessing a prisoner as he visits the Curran-Fromhold Correctional Facility in Philadelphia Sept. 27, 2015.

HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE LOCKED UP IN THE UNITED STATES?

The United States locks up more people, per capita, than any other nation. But grappling with why requires us to first consider the many types of correctional facilities and the reasons that 2.3 million people are confined there.



PRISON POLICY INITIATIVE

amendment.

“We argued that it should be less,” Bien reported. “We had experts who argued it should be 130 percent. Best, of course, would be 100 percent because that’s what the prisons were built for. But 137.5 percent is good. I’m not complaining that they got there. It’s great that they got there.”

He says the biggest factor bringing down the prison population was Prop. 47, passed by California voters in 2014. It reclassified some crimes — notably certain drug possession and petty theft charges — from felonies to misdemeanors. And it allowed those serving for these crimes to petition for reduced sentences. Moreover, fewer convicts would be sent to prison in the first place.

Bien pointed out another factor was Gov. Brown’s much touted realignment policy started in October 2011. Certain nonviolent, nonsexual, nonserious offenders were sent to county jails instead of state prisons. And then there was Prop. 36, which reduced some of the harsh life-sentencing measures of

The population of mentally ill prisoners hasn’t gone down in California’s penal institutions. It’s gone up.

the Three Strikes Law.

All of these lowered California’s prison population to 113,483 men and women, or 134.6 percent of design capacity for its prisons.

“So that’s where they are now, a little below their goal,” he said. “Now we have to evaluate it: Is it enough and is it durable? But that still hasn’t really been done.”

The attorney said there’s one elephant in the room still driving mass incarceration in California, an issue that hasn’t been talked about much — mentally ill prisoners. In 2013, he was lead counsel in three federal

court class action trials that exposed “cruel and unusual” mistreatment of individuals with mental illness. Three abuses that had gone on for years were brought to light: denial of psychiatric hospital services; use of force, including pepper spray; and overuse of solitary confinement.

The clients of Rosen Bien Galvan & Grunfeld LLP of San Francisco prevailed in all three trials. Reforms are currently being carried out, including the obvious — reducing the mentally ill population in state prisons.

“Now we’re finding out it’s not working as we expected. There’s a problem. The problem is the population of prisoners with mental illness has not gone down,” reported Bien. “So there’s actually right now more prisoners with mental illness than there were at the time that the three-judge court gave its order. And the percent has gone way up, from the 20s to now it’s more than 30 percent. So you need a higher level of care, more hospital beds, more mental health workers.”

'ACTING OUT MY ANGER'

Bobby Garcia says he's been through the "whole gamut" in California's penal system — from juvenile hall to maximum security prisons like Corcoran Security Housing Unit, Kern Valley, Mule Creek to Ironwood, where he was paroled from in 2014.

"They were just moving us around every two years in the '90s and 2000s because they were opening up so many new facilities," he explains. "They were mostly all crowded. It looked like a big can of sardines, putting us in three-high bunk beds in gyms and even classrooms. The system was busting at the seams.

"There was a lot of, like, frustrations, a lot of emotions raging, a lot of people on waiting lists to go to school and jobs. People were catching staph infections and Valley Fever. You couldn't get away from others. You could never feel like you were in a human environment."

Garcia was tried as an adult at 16 and sentenced to 25 years to life for being in a fight where a co-defendant stabbed and killed a rival gang member in Burbank. After serving 21 years, he got a parole hearing under a new state law, SB 260, and was released at age 38.

"I was actually fortunate that I was paroled on my first try," he notes. "What happened was 260 had just passed. And I went in with a lot of recommendations, like, from staff. And I had earned two college associate degrees from taking correspondence courses paid for by my wife.

"So I had all that good stuff, and they used the language that was in 260 to grant me parole. They said that I was susceptible to peer pressure with all the hallmarks of youth. So it worked in my favor."

For the last couple of years, the now 41-year-old man who grew up in Hollywood has been part of the Jesuit Restorative Justice Initiative team, running the Culver City office plus sharing his personal story with advocates, legislators and others. How he grew up angry in an alcoholic home with a missing dad.

"So I channeled all that anger into violence," he says. "And the only violence that meant something was being a gang member. So I was just acting out my anger: delinquency, truancy, getting bad grades, smoking pot and all that stuff. I just didn't know how to cope with what was going on around me."

Garcia says the "draconian days" in California prisons seem to have passed. But the institutions still don't resemble "Disneyland" and long waiting lists for self-help programs and education classes — heavy factors for being granted parole — remain.

When asked why California and the U.S. continue to lock up so many of its citizens — more than any other nation or state — he has a ready reply: drugs!

"What's happening now is we're still dealing with substance abuse problems," he points out. "Instead of treating the problem, we're locking them up. Because we are still refusing to see this as a disease and more as a choice. You know, 'They made their choice, so this is the consequence.' And because of that, they just incarcerate everybody.

"And then the fear tactics of get tough on crime," adds Garcia. "People from a different stratosphere in the economic system don't want to be victimized, so they pass all these harsh laws. It kind of shows that we're desensitized where we want quick solutions." ♦

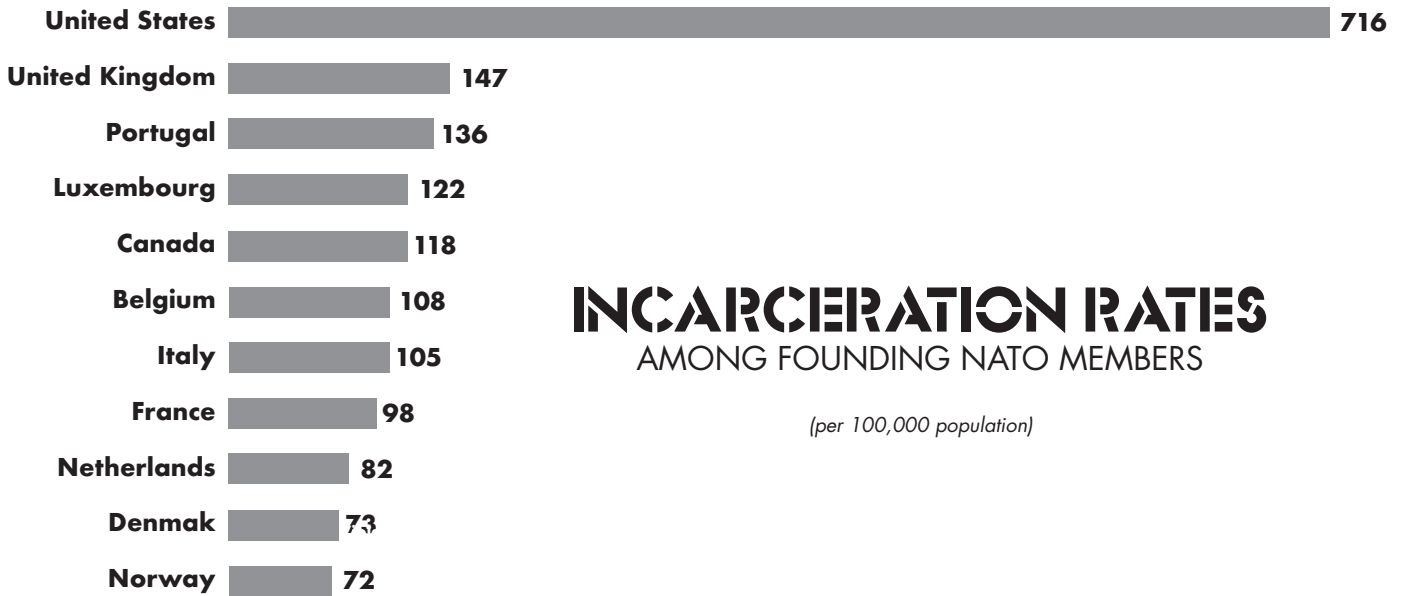


TAMARA TRADDO



KEYORK DJANSEZIAN/GETTY IMAGES

Inmates at Chino State Prison, which houses 5,500 inmates, crowd around the double and triple bunk beds in a gymnasium that was modified to house 213 prisoners on Dec. 10, 2010 in Chino, California. By a federal court ruling in 2011, California prisons must not exceed 137.5 percent of their designed capacity.



INCARCERATION RATES

AMONG FOUNDING NATO MEMBERS

(per 100,000 population)

He believes “something is going on” that isn’t necessarily intentional. Prosecutors and judges are well aware that inmates suffering from mental illness do really poorly in prison. Staff and other inmates perceive them as being dangerous by definition. They can also just be harder to handle.

“Are DAs and judges making sure that someone who’s mentally ill is going to CDCR [California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation] — prison — rather than stay in county jail? Cause they’re a pain in the butt to have in county jail. And they’re expensive,” he noted. “It’s not necessarily wrong that they’re doing this. It’s within their discretion. They can perceive them as more dangerous.”

He said once in prison they stay there longer. It’s a big circle. They get into trouble and wind up in maximum security institutions where there’s very few activities and self-help programs.

“And that tends to make people who are mentally ill worse,” Bien pointed out, “because of isolation and exclusion, you know. And they have even more behavior problems. So they literally serve longer sentences. So this is a real challenge. Their numbers are not dropping. This, and not having a durable remedy to make sure the prison population stays below the federal mandate, are the reasons we think the case isn’t over. And overcrowding makes everything impossible for everybody in prison.”

In the holding tank this time at Calipatria State Prison in Imperial County, March 2015, it wasn’t as cold. David Amaya was praying this morning for God to comfort his family and to allow him to show the commissioner and his deputy who he really was, you know, inside. He walked into the parole hearing room way more calm, feeling peace in his heart. Yeah, he still wanted to come home. But it was more about being able to right the wrongs he’d done. Be a good father, a good friend. Somebody that people would trust. Hurt no one else.

“Amaya, we spent all night in your file, and we have never seen anybody with as many victims or who was as violent as you were,” scolded the commissioner. “You were a monster. Do you agree?”

“Absolutely.”

It was a simple point the man was making, of course, so he had to



David Amaya said the commissioners that decided on his parole would look into his eyes, down into his very soul.

concede. If God hadn’t come into his life, it would have been different. He’d have tried to defend his gang behavior, all the violence he did to others. He’d have tried to minimize or make excuses or justify it. But, yeah, in his heart, absolutely, he had been a monster.

And they kept coming at him about his past. “Did you do this?” “Why?” “Were you a follower or a leader?”

“I was a leader. I was striving to be that leader. I was doing the things for my own selfish gain.” He was never a shot caller, yeah, but he’d desperately wanted to be.

It went on like this, back and forth, for 5 1/2 straight hours.

During deliberations this time, they let him sit with his lawyer in the attorney room. She said if it was quick, they’d be back in 15 minutes with a release date. So when a half-hour went by, no way he was getting one. So he asked her to do him a favor. Call his wife and explain what happened. If he called, they’d just get into another argument.

After 45 minutes, a guard finally came to get them.

Again, the commissioner started with, “Amaya, you were a very violent... You were, in fact, a monster. You

had no feelings for anyone. You ...”

He put his head down on the table, stopped listening. Going on 25 years behind bars. Would he ever be free again?

After a while, he thought he was having one of those freakin’ out-of-body experiences: “But the man in front of us today isn’t that person. We believe you’re a changed man. And we are going to grant you parole.”

“I couldn’t believe it hearing these words,” he told me. “And it was just like everything I needed to hear from my Father and my God. They were saying, ‘You know, you’re compassionate, you’re caring, you’re insightful. We believe you’re going to succeed out there in society.’ They were telling me this. It was like a long confession.

“Even before I went into that room I was following God, but my past was still, like, picking at me,” he confided. “And when I walked out of that room, it was like, ‘OK, I’m no longer that person. I see it. I get it. I understand. My past is my past.’ It was like a clearing. Just hearing them words, it just gave me another sense: “This is who I am now.” ♦

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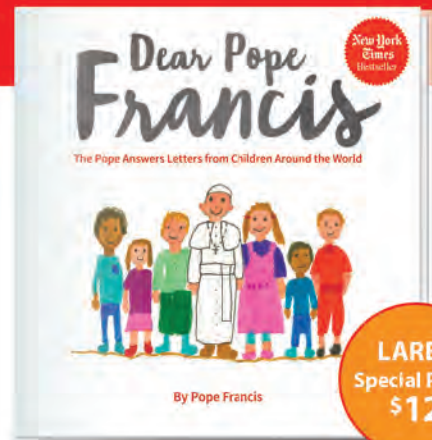
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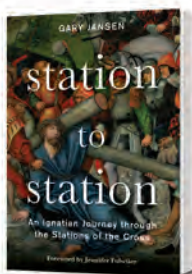
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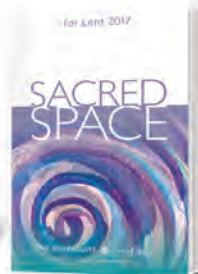
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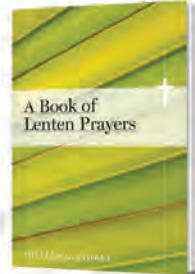
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