

Tamara Kay v. The Irish Rover Dismissed

Defamation suit brought by Notre Dame professor deemed “frivolous”

EDITORIAL BOARD

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The defamation lawsuit brought against the *Irish Rover* by Prof. Tamara Kay in June 2023 was dismissed by St. Joseph County, Indiana, Superior Court on Jan 8, 2024, under Indiana’s Anti-SLAPP law.

The court’s ruling, issued by Justice Steven David, held that “the alleged defamatory statements were true, within the meaning of the law, not made with actual malice, did not contain a defamatory inference, and there were no damages that were causally linked to *The Irish Rover* Articles, Dr. Kay’s defamation claim fails and the statements in the Articles were lawful.”

This dismissal concludes the lawsuit brought against the *Rover* by Prof. Kay, in which Kay claimed that the *Rover* had defamed her through an October 2022 article on her public promotion of abortion and a March 2023 article reporting on a College Democrats lecture. The initial legal complaint claimed that the *Rover*, “has,



Image by the Irish Rover

and continues to intentionally act, with malice, wanton and willful misconduct and a reckless disregard for the truth all with the intent to damage and negatively impact the Plaintiff.”

The Jan. 8 court order, filed in the St. Joseph Circuit and Superior Courts, however,

concluded that “the allegedly defamatory statements were made in the furtherance of the defendant’s right to free speech, were made in connection with a public issue, were made with good faith and with a reasonable basis in law and fact.”

The court ruling affirmed

that Kay “cannot voluntarily put herself into the national abortion issue either on the campus of Notre Dame or in a broader, national forum, by making multiple strong statements in favor of abortion rights and access to abortion and expect that it will not become

newsworthy at Notre Dame and elsewhere.”

The Indiana Court ruling reaffirms the *Rover’s* initial statement on the baseless lawsuit released in July 2023. As stated then, the articles were “fair and accurate in all respects. The record will confirm this beyond dispute. The *Rover* will not apologize for just and truthful reporting that helps Our Lady’s University stay true to its Catholic mission.”

In filing and pursuing this lawsuit over the course of the last year, Kay attempted to silence and intimidate undergraduate students at her own university for accurate reporting on her public comments. We hope that this ruling will serve to discourage such efforts to chill free speech in the future and invigorate others to courageously exercise their right to freedom of speech in pursuit of the truth.

We would like to thank the Bopp Law Firm and all those who supported the *Rover’s* legal defense over the past year.

In Notre Dame,
The 2023–2024 Editorial Staff
of the *Irish Rover*

SMC Students Reveal Censorship, Harassment on Campus Amidst Controversy

Women’s college reverses admissions policy on biological men

NICO SCHMITZ & LYDIA POE
Editor-in-Chief & Staff Writer

In a historic decision, Saint Mary’s College (SMC) reversed a November policy extending admission to people who are not female but “who consistently live and identify as women.” But now, the SMC students who helped prompt this change claim systematic targeting and harassment by college administrators and other members of the SMC community.

The November 2023 announcement that SMC would consider applications from males who identify as women sparked debate and outrage both online and on campus. Concerned alumnae, parents, and students quickly formed a Facebook discussion forum to facilitate updates, offer prayers,

and invite others to join the cause against the policy. This group quickly gained over 800 members in the span of three weeks, and has now become a place for alumnae to receive news about Catholic identity at SMC. Its scope has grown to include class recommendations, updates on administrative policies, and happenings on campus.

SMC students who opposed the policy described the threats, intimidation, and censorship they faced from their campus community in interviews with the *Rover*.

Claire Bettag, a junior at SMC, explained that when the policy first was released, “a group of girls decided to go around the school and put up sticky notes with phrases that would represent how unhappy the students were with their

decision. We also chalked up the sidewalks.”

The next day, “Everything was taken down and washed off,” she continued. “We were accused of ‘hate speech’ and being ‘transphobic,’ but this is not the case. ... They sent members from administration seated in the hallways of academic buildings trying to intimidate the women who were opposed to the policy.”

Taylor Miske-Phillips, another student at SMC, echoed Bettag’s sentiments, describing the verbal harassment she faced after she started a change.org petition opposing the new policy. She explained, “I experienced a lot of people calling me nasty names, and when I brought it up to the Dean of Students, she just said they were practicing freedom of speech, but we were

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Students Attend Annual March for Life

Marian-themed pilgrimage marks second year of post-Roe march

LUCY SPENCE
Staff Writer

Students in Notre Dame’s Right to Life club joined thousands from around the nation for the 51st annual March for Life in Washington, D.C. Over 300 students from Notre Dame attended this year’s march on January 19 to give personal witness to the sanctity of human life, echoing the university’s commitment to defend the most vulnerable.

This year’s march was the second since the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* in June of 2022. With the passage of *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization*, the pro-life movement now can focus on advocating for policies on both the state and federal level, instead of only at the Supreme Court. Despite this

development, the national march still occurs in D.C. The non-profit organization March for Life explains its new emphasis: “The necessary work to build a culture of life in the United States of America is not finished. ... The goal of the national March for Life is to not only change laws at the state and federal level, but to change the culture to ultimately make abortion unthinkable.”

Notre Dame Right to Life leadership emphasized that this year’s march should be thought of as a pilgrimage. Accordingly, the theme for the trip was “Under her Mantle,” a tribute to the university’s namesake, a mother herself. Gregory Pratt, a current junior and this year’s Trip Coordinator, reflected on the importance of this message: “Supporting expectant mothers

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THE FINE PRINT

Founded in 2003, the *Irish Rover* is an independent, Catholic newspaper published fortnightly by students of the University of Notre Dame du Lac, and, as such, it receives no funding or official recognition from the University. Indeed, the ideas presented herein are not necessarily those of the University, although they probably should be.

The *Rover* was established by Notre Dame students who desired a strong and organized conservative voice on campus with the primary purpose of keeping the University true to its founding mission as a Roman Catholic institution. The *Rover* seeks to facilitate part of what the University's mission statement desires in its community: "a forum where through free inquiry and open discussion the various lines of Catholic thought may intersect with all the forms of knowledge found in the arts, sciences, professions, and every other area of human scholarship and creativity." To provide this forum, the *Rover* offers a distinctive kind of coverage that includes campus news, religion, politics, culture, history, humor and sports.

Out of civility, the *Rover* will not critically mention names of students, professors, or administrators, unless the person is either a well-known member of the community, or he or she has openly sought publicity. Unsigned editorials represent the majority opinion of the *Rover's* Editorial Board, while content in individual columns represents the views of each respective author and should not be construed as representing the views of the entire staff. All comments and questions regarding the *Rover's* policies and editorial content, as well as Letters to the Editor, may be directed to the Editor-in-Chief, Nico Schmitz, at NDIrishRover@gmail.com or PO Box 46 Notre Dame IN 46556. These letters may be printed anonymously, upon request. Also, please visit our website www.irishrover.net, where you can peruse archives and subscribe to the paper.

"To that lovely Lady, raised high on a dome, a Golden Dome, men may look and find the answer." – Fr. Edward Sorin



Image by University of Notre Dame

God, Country, Conformity

NICO SCHMITZ

Editor-in-Chief



God, Country, Notre Dame: Fr. Hesburgh, the renowned former president of the university, titled his autobiography with this famous phrase—taken from the inscription above the east doors of the basilica—making it the unofficial slogan of the university for decades to come.

But, even if it once was, this motto is no longer rooted in the exceptionalism required for fitting service of the Incarnate God. It has morphed into a recognition that Notre Dame will constantly move with the ever-shifting landscape of a democratic world—so much so that the broader culture has taken Notre Dame as its litmus test for American religiosity.

The origins of this transformation can be found through examining Fr. Hesburgh's legacy. Father Hesburgh successfully formulated the modern Catholic research university: Notre Dame now stands alone in its distinct combination of academic prestige and commitment to the faith.

While much has changed at Notre Dame since Hesburgh's tenure, the university remains a deeply American institution. Superficially, this commitment is manifested through the university's proud support of the armed forces, an allegiance not found at other elite American universities. As opposed to its

peers, Notre Dame does not harbor an openly anti-American attitude among its student body, nor a particularly political climate on campus. In fact, Notre Dame is one the few universities yet to face legitimate controversy regarding the ongoing conflict in Gaza, while campuses all around the country have become hotbeds of political activism.

This could be a product of Notre Dame's demographics, religiosity, tradition, location, or any combination of these things. Wherever it comes from, though, Notre Dame is unapologetically devoted to America. In many ways, the university has found its niche as an unabashedly American and unmistakably Catholic university.

But this too often means that the university simply mirrors the political and social landscapes of the country as a whole—often holding "democratic norms" in place of truth.

Currently, this is best exemplified through the university's recent and uncharacteristically passionate commitment to upholding "democratic norms" in the face of the alleged attacks on democracy. The Office of the President is hosting a year-long forum on "The Future of Democracy" which has hosted Supreme Court Justice Elena Kagan and Senators Chris Coon and Todd Young. The forum's uninspiring topics—bipartisanship, civility, and voting rights—seem a half-hearted attempt to mollify left leaning media, professors, and students while refraining from offending lukewarm alumni on the right and the small conservative contingent on campus. The forum targets the political extremism of our time, concluding thus far that our democracy would be saved if there was only more open dialogue and if more young people voted.

While typically insipid on matters of public interest or controversy, Provost John McGreevy and Dean of the College of Arts and Letters Sarah

Mustillo penned an emotional letter which disavowed the flying of a God, Country, Notre Dame flag in the U.S. Capitol during the January 6, 2021 protests. They wrote, "Authentic respect for God, country and Notre Dame means rejecting the attack on democracy at the people's Capitol on Jan. 6, denouncing race-based violence and blocking these toxic political views from distorting conversations about the future of our Church."

Their letter, at its core, represents the true essence of God, Country, Notre Dame today on campus: God informs the democratic morality which distinguishes us from other elite universities. This formulation is as unobjectionable as it is bland.

Political conservatives are placated by the university's basic commitments to the "right to life" and to the "American Project." But the university's loose interpretation of Church teaching on sexuality and its relatively liberal consensus among the faculty satisfies the contemporary center-left. Both sides claim discrimination, yet neither have the zeal to push back.

What instances such as McGreevy and Mustillo's letter exemplify, though, is that the university will unequivocally stick close to the middle, even when that middle is constantly shifting left. Whether through its continued secularization or its continued abandonment of traditional teachings on sexuality, Notre Dame's institutional positioning does not stray far from the path of national consensus.

This centrism is far from the vision put forth by the winner of Fr. Sorin and Ave Maria Press's May 31, 1866 essay contest, instituted to commemorate the official consecration of the University of Notre Dame and the dedication of the statue of the Virgin Mary atop the dome.

After co-winning the contest, Orestes Brownson—now buried in the crypt of the basilica—was

commissioned by Fr. Sorin to write an essay on the importance of national devotion to Our Lady by Fr. Sorin. In the essay, Brownson argued that Mary ought to be the image that our country follows, because Mary was fully human and assumed into heaven. He writes, "Mary's virtues [being] the virtues of our own race is a reason why the devotion to her ... is fitted to exert a most salutary influence on individuals and nations, and on the manners and morals of society at large."

As Brownson explains, our devotion to the Virgin Mary ought to inspire our community and its leaders to be unafraid of stepping beyond societal norms, offering the country an authentic depiction of what it means to be a Catholic university at its core. We should work to cultivate her virtues in their fullness—not reshape them according to secular moral consensus.

Instead, Notre Dame embodies the status quo. Her unrelenting commitment to the cultural "middle" places her under the scrutiny of national media on a nearly monthly basis. National audiences on both sides of the political spectrum react to the frequent appearance of the Golden Dome on their Twitter feed with the same reaction: "Look at what happens at a Catholic university..."

Notre Dame thus bears a responsibility unlike many of its peer institutions. This responsibility originates not just from its unique political makeup nor its frequent appearance in news, but most fundamentally from its Catholic identity. As long as the university maintains a commitment and appearance of Catholicity, the responsibility will grow.

Nico Schmitz is a senior from Pasadena, California in the Program of Liberal Studies.



Class of 2024 Objects to Commencement Speaker Selection

Father Jenkins to be first Notre Dame president to deliver address

MERLOT FOGARTY

Staff Writer

The Notre Dame Board of Trustees has appointed retiring Notre Dame President, Fr. John Jenkins, C.S.C., to give the commencement address to this year's graduating class.

Since the announcement, many members of the class of 2024 have expressed frustration with the choice. The *Rover* spoke with 100 Notre Dame seniors representing all 32 residence halls, polled randomly in public spaces around campus. Of those surveyed, only four supported the decision and 84 did not, with 12 remaining indifferent.

Many expressed that they felt cheated once again, just as they were cheated out of their high school graduations in the spring of 2020 and forced to navigate their first year of college amid severe COVID restrictions.

Many seniors asked a similar question: Wouldn't Fr. Jenkins have spoken anyway? In the past, Fr. Jenkins offered remarks at commencement before introducing the year's speaker, as well as given the homily at the baccalaureate Mass.

One Keenan senior told the *Rover*, "Our class had the opportunity to hear him speak at the Junior Parents' Weekend (JPW) dinner last year, where he reflected on the major events of his presidency that coincided with our class' time at Notre Dame."

"I honestly don't know what more he could possibly add that he didn't already cover last year, and I fully expect him to reiterate a lot of that speech," he continued.

Father Jenkins' JPW speech focused largely on the class of 2024's legacy as the "COVID class," a sentiment many seniors claimed they were tired of hearing, which many students felt was

reductive and unfair. A former student senator from Lyons Hall expanded on this complaint: "Fr. Jenkins means something very different to our class than to any other class, and that's mainly because he was our leader during COVID. He set the tone for our four years on this campus, and to a large extent that tone was seen as insincere, especially following the incident at the White House Rose Garden."

"We are so much more than just the class who made it through COVID," a Walsh resident lamented.

Insourcing is an almost-unprecedented move for the university. An outgoing president has never been asked to give the address, and the last time a Holy Cross priest gave the commencement address was in 1945, with Graduate Dean Phillip S. Moore. The announcement from the Board of Trustees acknowledged this anomaly, saying, "While Notre Dame typically selects a distinguished speaker external to the university, we believe at this moment Fr. Jenkins's leadership and exemplary service to the university make him a most fitting choice."

"Every year, Notre Dame has the opportunity to invite a speaker from around the globe," an O'Neill senior challenged. "This seems like a cop-out." Nearly one third of the students with whom the *Rover* spoke echoed that sentiment.

Many seniors wanted someone with insight about life outside of Notre Dame, after college, in the "real world" into which they are about to enter. "Father Jenkins wouldn't really be that," a student from Alumni said. "I feel like my perspective wasn't considered when making the decision as to what speaker would appeal to the majority of the class," said another.

A Letter from the Editorial



Image by the University of Notre Dame

Board of the *Observer* similarly condemned the choice of Fr. Jenkins as the Commencement speaker arguing the benefits of an outside voice for a graduating senior class.

Of the four students who supported the decision, two contended that Fr. Jenkins did his best with the hand he was dealt. "I have a lot of respect for him as an individual. I really respect that he decided to keep us open during COVID," one Baumer resident commented. The two others merely said he was a better choice than President Joe Biden.

Still, some asked: Why this year? And why Fr. Jenkins? "He didn't do anything totally transformative," said an RA in Pasquerilla West. Some have speculated that the decision may be an attempt by the university to enshrine Jenkins' legacy along Notre Dame icons like Fr. Theodore Hesburgh.

Father Wilson Miscamble, C.S.C., author of *Go Forth and Do Good: Memorable Notre Dame Commencement Addresses*—a collection of 24 notable commencement speeches—recalled in an interview with the

Rover that even Hesburgh was not chosen as speaker for his outgoing 1987 class, but rather offered a "charge" to the class before introducing Derek Bok, the chosen speaker.

"Perhaps the chair of the Board of Trustees wanted to elevate Fr. Jenkins's remarks in some way, but this is a perplexing decision and denies the senior class the opportunity to hear from a distinguished speaker from beyond the university," Fr. Miscamble remarked.

"Looking on the brighter side, however, this decision means that our commencement speaker will not be some pro-choice figure at odds with the university's deepest commitments. We can be grateful for that," he chimed.

A Farley resident cited examples of leadership counter to the university's mission, "From all of the awful COVID policies and the drag show, I don't think he has really been an inspiring figure." A Keenan senior worried the choice might be an "an attempt to endorse the direction that Fr. Jenkins has taken the university, which has all-too often prioritized academic prestige

over her Catholic identity." He continued, "My class' graduation is being used to cement Jenkins' legacy."

Others wondered if the growing polarization between political parties made it impossible to choose someone with whom the entire student population would be content. "It seems more representative of politics within the administration than a choice for us," a Cavanaugh senior stated. More than one-in-five of those interviewed asked why Taylor Swift couldn't have been invited as a neutral party.

Despite strong opposition from the senior class, a few students wished to call on Fr. Jenkins to use this platform to make up for past mistakes and reinvigorate an appreciation for the Catholic identity of Notre Dame. A Baumer senior thanked Jenkins for his courage in opening the university in the fall of 2020, "I hope the courage he showed then is revealed in his address," he said, "this is an opportunity for Jenkins to solidify the Catholic identity and direction of the university, and call us to that same courageous Catholic leadership."

Fr. Jenkins will rank among six United States presidents, one vice president, five archbishops, six governors, 10 senators, 14 Cabinet members, two directors of the Peace Corps, six heads of state, and many other exceptional individuals who have previously delivered the address.

Merlot Fogarty is a senior studying theology, political science, and constitutional studies. A strong non-compliant throughout the COVID regime (and many other controversial happenings), she is simply grateful to Fr. Jenkins for not kicking her out of Notre Dame. Contact her at merlot.fogarty@nd.edu.

SMC Controversy

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not allowed to reciprocate in that matter by any means."

Miske-Phillips' petition was then censored by change.org and removed from the site. As reported by the Washington Times, a change.org spokesperson stated, "Elements of this petition were identified as hate speech, and therefore, the petition was removed. While we want our platform to be used to campaign about any issue our users care about, this must be done in a way that is safe and does not incite hate."

Because the public voicing of their opinion on the policy was restricted, Bettag and other students attempted to organize meetings to discuss the situation through the unofficial Turning Point USA chapter of SMC. Bettag told the *Rover*, "Dean

of Students Gloria Jenkins threatened me and stated that I would go through the 'conduct process' if I decided to get together with these girls to discuss the policy. At the time of our meeting, she sent campus safety officers throughout all buildings trying to track down our meeting."

In addition to the censorship faced by college officials, Bettag also described feeling unsafe on campus. She told the *Rover* that she learned "that there was a group of girls at Notre Dame who were planning on coming over to our campus to find out where we lived. We didn't know what they were going to do with this information, but Macy and I feared for our safety."

Macy Gunnell, an SMC sophomore, discovered the policy change, sparking the controversial decision's reversal. She told the *Rover*, "Campus

blew up. We've been getting a lot of hate for our opposition to it. One girl got racial slurs on her door for being conservative. Other people were getting death threats—a lot of really negative things, online especially."

She continued, "Unfortunately, because the school has a habit of silencing conservative voices, there are not a lot of people willing to speak up against it. We got a lot of backlash, and people started making really outrageous claims—that we were calling for the genocide of transgender people, saying really horrible things about how we were writing slurs. That is not true, not from us."

Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades, Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, issued a statement on the Catholic identity of the college in response to the initial policy change. He declared, "It is disappointing that I, as bishop

of the diocese in which Saint Mary's College is located, was not included or consulted on a matter of Catholic teaching." He went on to note that "the desire of Saint Mary's College to show hospitality to people who identify as transgender is not the problem. The problem is a Catholic woman's college embracing a definition of woman that is not Catholic."

Continuing through January and February, SMC has introduced a series of listening sessions "to explore what it means to embrace our values as a Catholic, women's college," per a campus-wide email.

The college's decision to reverse their November policy was announced in a December 21 email from SMC President Katie Conboy and Board Chair Maureen Karantz Smith. The pair noted their regret that the controversy created a "sense

of division in our campus community and among our extended alumnae family."

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Lydia Poe, a sophomore studying management and international business, has discovered that there's a patron saint for absolutely everything, including coffee, explosives, and procrastination. If you're in need of assistance for an oddly specific situation, reach out to her at lpoe01@saintmarys.edu, and she'll help you find the perfect heavenly ally.



Jennifer Newsome Martin Appointed de Nicola Center Director

Theologian to succeed Professor O. Carter Snead as head of dCEC

MICHAEL CANADY &

MADELYN STOUT

Campus Co-Editor & Layout Manager

The de Nicola Center for Ethics and Culture (dCEC) announced on January 23 the appointment of Professor Jennifer Newsome Martin as their next director. Dean of Arts and Letters Sarah Mustillo appointed Martin to succeed O. Carter Snead, who has led the center since his appointment in 2012. Martin will begin her tenure as dCEC director on July 1, 2024.

Snead celebrated Martin's appointment in a press release from the dCEC: "I can think of no one better to lead the Center into the future than my friend and dCEC faculty fellow Jenny Martin." Snead continued, "She has a heart for the dCEC's mission in all its dimensions, is a brilliant scholar, a beloved teacher, and a dynamic and inspiring leader. Simply put, Jenny is one of the most exciting Catholic intellectuals in academia today."

Martin holds joint appointments as an associate professor in the Program of Liberal Studies (PLS) and the Department of Theology. As a faculty fellow with the dCEC, Martin's research has focused on the thought of Hans Urs von Balthasar and 19th- and 20th-century Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox thought.

She will be the third director of

the dCEC, which was founded in 1999, in order to engage with "the most pressing and complex questions of ethics, culture, and public policy today." Through its various programs, the center also aims to "strengthen Notre Dame's Catholic character on campus," especially through its Culture of Life Initiatives, which have included sponsoring the university's attendance at the annual March for Life.

Martin outlined some ideas that she hopes to implement as director in an interview with the *Rover*. She was also clear that her background as a "humanist and theologian" will play an influential role in her plans "to heighten the humanities element of the center."

She continued, explaining that the center's approach to ethics will center around a conception of "full human flourishing," including "public policy, books or religious traditions, and historical traditions."

One initiative highlighted was an increased emphasis on Dante as a central figure for the center. She explained, "Dante is so important for so many different fields, and the dCEC is very self-consciously interdisciplinary." Martin expanded this idea in her Directorship Vision Statement, where she wrote about the possibility of "collaborating with the Center for Italian Studies and the Zahm Dante Collection in the Hesburgh Libraries' Rare Books collection to situate Notre Dame as an interdisciplinary destination for Dante Studies."

Martin also expressed her hope that the university—through the center—would expand its influence in local South Bend schools as part of its "student formation" programming. This focus would "bring and shore up the humanities education in diocesan schools as well, so that there is a Catholic vision of the humanities animating even the high school level."

She wrote, "One way of doing this might be to recruit (with funding) current Notre Dame professors in history, literature, the social sciences, theology, music, sacred music, and fine arts to serve as what we might call the 'dCEC St. John Henry Newman Fellows.'"

But alongside these new enterprises, Martin also stressed her role as "a faithful steward of the good work of my predecessors."

As director, Martin will inherit a directorship that has been marked by "twelve years of unprecedented growth," according to the center's announcement. Since the beginning of Snead's tenure, the dCEC has expanded its initiatives dramatically, including its annual Fall Conference, various book series, and its steady support of students through the Sorin Fellows Program.

The dCEC staff expressed their appreciation for Snead's time in office. Margaret Cabaniss, Assistant Director of the dCEC, highlighted Snead's leadership "to project Notre Dame's countercultural voice into the

public square on the most pressing questions of human dignity, freedom, and the common good."

During her 12-year tenure, Martin has received several teaching awards. Several former students shared their enthusiasm for their experience with the *Rover*.

Frankie Machado, a junior who took a course with Martin, commented on her role as a teacher. He remarked, "Professor Martin provided me with an excitement and passion for texts which I had always heard of but never knew the reason for their fame. She made me excited to learn about books like the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* and discuss hard texts such as Plato's *Symposium* in our Great Books Seminar I Class."

Another former student, Marcelle Cuoto, echoed this sentiment: "I had the experience of having Professor Martin teach me in both the Theology and PLS departments, and I was so thrilled when I heard she was being appointed. Her classes were so inspiring and she developed the students' appreciation of beauty, especially in its relation to truth."



Image by Notre Dame Theology

Michael Canady is a sophomore studying classics and constitutional studies. His current interests include the JFK Assassination and whether his last name's etymology has evolved from Kennedy. He can be reached at mcanady2@nd.edu.

Madelyn Stout is a senior majoring in political science and English. She is on her sixth book of the semester and is contemplating why since she is employed come post-graduation. If you're interested in either the book she is currently reading or Christian education email her at mstout2@nd.edu.

March for Life

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is such an important part of promoting a culture of life, that we wanted to turn to Our Blessed Mother to ask for her intercession and her protection for all mothers and their babies." In line with the theme, students carried signs with images dedicated to various Marian apparitions and invocations.

The morning of the march, the group attended Life Fest, an event hosted by the Sisters of Life that included adoration, Mass, and testimonies given by mothers who were supported by the Sisters during their pregnancies.

Students also attended the rally held on the National Mall before the march. Arousing conflicting feelings in many of the Fighting Irish present, Michigan football coach and 2024 national champion Jim Harbaugh gave the introduction to the keynote speech, delivered by former NFL player Benjamin Watson. Other speakers included Jeanne Mancini, president of the March for Life, and Jean Marie Davis, a survivor of human trafficking.

Though the number of attendees was lower this year,

returners to the march noted that the joyful atmosphere was unchanged. Father Karl Romkema, C.S.C., Director of the Old College Undergraduate Seminary, spoke to the continued sense of enthusiasm in the post-Dobbs era: "There's always been a surprising amount of joy at the march, but I think it feels more peaceful. There's more resolution about the issue, and so the overwhelming feeling would be celebration."

Fr. Romkema continued, "As a priest, my favorite thing about the March for Life is seeing the Church in Her grandeur, Her beauty, especially united over a real-world justice issue. You look around, you see so many clearly Catholic people, and that's my favorite part—even more than the political, it's the ecclesial."

Junior Annaliese Anderson reflected on the experience, saying, "The atmosphere of the march is electrifying. To witness thousands of people singing, praying, and laughing as they trudge through freezing snow (and, in our case, after a sleepless bus ride) is a truly impactful experience. It made me love my classmates even more and really testifies to the fact that the culture of life is one of joy, fellowship, and strength."



Image by Matthew Scherber

For many students, this trip was their first time attending the march. Freshman Annabelle Wehrle told the *Rover*, "It's incredible to see everyone from around the country trying to support and protect life at a national level. Here in the place where our government is supposed to protect the rights of our citizens, we're here protecting the most vulnerable. Just like so many other historical movements over the years, this will be another success story."

This year, the feast day of Blessed Basil Moreau, founder of the Congregation of Holy

Cross, aligned with the Saturday after the march. In celebration of this fortunate coincidence, tri-campus students joined Holy Cross priests at the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception for a Mass offered by Fr. Terry Ehrman, C.S.C., Right to Life Chaplain. Gregory Pratt noted, "I remember sitting there in the pew thinking how amazing it was that our club was able to have Mass at the National Shrine, a basilica dedicated to Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, reminding us that Mary always keeps us under her mantle."

In the post-Dobbs era, many are looking to influence state governments as the fight against abortion moves to include the local sphere as well. But giving advice to students at Notre Dame hoping to promote a pro-life culture on campus, Fr. Romkema suggested a broader focus: "A big part of the reason we come on the national March for Life—to walk alongside hundreds of thousands of other people who believe in life—is to understand that we are not a fringe, radical point of view. As a matter of fact, we are mainstream and may even find ourselves in the majority, especially among young people. And so I encourage us to take solace in that; it's an issue that you can talk about and that we must talk about."

Lucy Spence is a freshman from Northern Virginia studying piano performance and Something Else. She can be found on campus at the piano, avoiding North Dining Hall, or chasing the squirrels on God Quad. Order personalized pictures of these glorified rats at lspence@nd.edu.



Nearly 500 Students Study Confessions

Hundreds register for Fr. Kevin Grove's course on St. Augustine's autobiography

ELIZABETH HALE
Managing Editor

The Department of Theology is offering a new one-credit course on Augustine's *Confessions*, taught by Father Kevin Grove, C.S.C. The class of almost 500 students meets Monday nights in DeBartolo Hall. According to the class's course description, the entirety of the course is given to "examine Augustine's *Confessions*."

Although the class does not fulfill any university, college, or major requirements, every seat is filled. In an email to students registered for the course, Fr. Grove said, "You have packed the house. There will be no extra seats in DeBartolo 101. If sitting next to your friends is important for you, you'll probably want to arrive a little early."

As hundreds of students packed into the largest classroom on campus, Fr. Grove thanked the class for enrolling in a course that offers no incentive, other than a chance for spiritual growth. He said, "I don't get any credit for teaching this, but clearly, because the books are gone, there are over 470 of you, and I'm really thrilled to be with you."

Father Grove continued, "The most consistent image for Augustine is a heart that's on fire, and this is the goal for the whole semester. ... What would it mean for each of us, each in his or her own particular way, to



Image by the Irish Rover

have a heart that is somehow on fire? And so the goal of this class is amazingly personal for you and for your friends."

The course was conceived in conversation between Fr. Grove and one of his sophomore residents in Dunne Hall, Noah Allen. Allen told the *Rover*, "The idea for a book club based on Augustine's *Confessions* came about as a result of my desire to learn from Fr. Kevin and deepen my faith along with Fr. Kevin's (slight) obsession with *Confessions*. While we both liked the idea, I was honest with him about the likelihood of other guys (including myself) actively attending on a weekly basis. That spurred the question, 'Could you

make it a one credit class?' From there, Fr. Kevin took hold of the idea and ran with it."

Sophomore Alejandra Ricardo, another student in the class, said that she signed up for the course because of her experience in Fr. Grove's "Foundations of Theology" class. She said, "Fr. Grove has a special grace that allows him to connect with his students in deeply meaningful ways. He manages to creatively present the material, allowing his students to personally integrate it to their lives. The first class I took with Fr. Grove was a blessing. So, when I saw the opportunity to replicate that gift, I took it without a second thought."

After the first class session,

seat taken: 455 students. The kids are hungry for the true, the good, and the beautiful. Let's give it to them."

Ricardo echoed Bachiochi's sentiment, saying, "It makes me very hopeful to see this class happening. It seems almost inconceivable that over 400 students are taking a course that fulfills no requirements and meets at 7 p.m. on Mondays purely out of a desire to grow in their faith. This is the sort of magic that is unique to Notre Dame, which reminds me why I chose to come here in the first place."

Junior Caroline Gramm said in an interview with the *Rover*, "It's really encouraging to see such

the mother of a student in the course and renowned author and legal scholar, Erika Bachiochi, expressed her excitement on the social media app X. She posted a picture of the full lecture hall with the caption: "Word from @NotreDame is that the single credit class being offered this semester on Augustine's *Confessions* is packed, every

a packed group of people in the class. ... It reminded me why I love Notre Dame so much."

In an interview with the *Rover*, Fr. Grove likewise expressed optimism about the enthusiasm of Notre Dame students. He said, "The energy and engagement of our students [at Notre Dame] has always been edifying to me, but this number and zeal is particularly a source of joy."

Noah Allen said, "I also believe that more theology classes could adopt this one-credit, low stakes approach because it takes away the stress of a class and makes it much more enjoyable. The fact that it is one-credit also means that people are most likely there because they chose to be!"

The only assignment for the course is a spiritual autobiography, which every student must complete. Fr. Grove promised students that he will read through each autobiography and respond, via handwritten letter, to every student who wished over the summer.

Elizabeth Hale is a junior studying political science and Italian studies. Often described as a "loose cannon," she is very excited that she is actually being encouraged to overshare in the context of this course. If you would like to read a test-run of her autobiography, she can be reached at ehale@nd.edu.

Notre Dame Choirs Tour During Christmas Break

Basilica choirs perform sacred music across the country

MATTIE LOSSING & LIAM SCHLOSSER
Staff Writers

The Notre Dame basilica choirs brought their gift of song to audiences throughout the United States this Christmas break. The Folk Choir, which sings the basilica's noon Mass on Sundays, toured the Midwest while the Liturgical Choir, the basilica's choir for 10 a.m. Sunday Mass and feast days, traveled to the Southeast. The Magnificat Women's Choir, which sings Saturday Vigil Masses, also toured the American Southwest over break.

The Notre Dame Liturgical Choir's Southeast tour—the group's first domestic tour since the outbreak of COVID—included stops at churches throughout Georgia, Florida, and the Carolinas.

The choir faced early uncertainty in the tour's planning stages as the trip's projected group marked one of the smallest in Liturgical Choir history. However, the zeal of the travelers, combined with a setlist crafted around the group's particular strengths, propelled

the tour into execution.

Despite the added challenge of numerous weather delays throughout the trip, the choir managed to complete all of its planned performances, which included Catholic and non-Catholic venues alike. The departure from Catholic

settings was met with some level of reluctance by the choir, with one singer feeling "slightly disturbed by the Protestant services' imitations of the Catholic liturgy." Tour Director and junior Steven Conaway added that the unfamiliar environments were "definitely a change," but many nevertheless felt the choice was a positive one.

"It was interesting learning about other traditions such as Anglican Choral Evensong," Conaway remarked. Sophomore Catherine O'Donnell even



Image by the Irish Rover

regarded the choir's performance at the First Presbyterian Church of New Bern, North Carolina as her favorite of the tour, noting the "smaller, carpeted space" allowed for a more "intimate" concert and an audience "really engaged in the music."

The tour's setlist included a diverse assortment of pieces, encompassing a variety of languages and musical traditions. Accordingly, choir members' favorite tour pieces were equally diverse. Senior Keo Pangan, for instance, favored Sergei

that "points to the power and sheer force that spiritually hit the world and changed it forever" in the Incarnation.

Conversely, first-year law student Michael Love resonated with Herbert Howells' collection of evening canticles titled "Collegium Regale," calling the words and arrangement of the collection "extremely powerful." Love particularly enjoyed Howells' rendition of the Glory Be. "Though obviously a familiar prayer," Love said, "[the Glory Be] is a radical and

Rachmaninoff's "Bogoroditse Devo"—a Russian translation of the Hail Mary—for its particularly intense focal point. Pangan told the *Rover*, "The sound hits its climax and is released at the moment where the text reads, 'for Thou hast borne the Savior of our souls.'" Pangan interprets this moment as one

timeless encapsulation of the Christian faith, and Howell's arrangement captures the grandeur communicated by the simple statement."

Unlike its international tour in Spring 2023, the choir's domestic tour included numerous homestays with local Notre Dame alumni and church volunteers. Although a new experience for many, the group overwhelmingly reveled in the opportunity to interact with their host families. "I am so grateful for the families who let us stay with them during the tour," O'Donnell gushed. "The families we stayed with were so generous and accommodating, and it was cool to see how much they still support Notre Dame groups, no matter the year they were students." Conaway further emphasized his appreciation for the hosts' "hospitality and kindness" towards the choir.

In the absence of tours during and in the aftermath of COVID-19, the choir received a renewed perspective on the importance of touring—both for, as Conaway asserts, fostering choir "camaraderie" and "fulfill[ing the choir's] mission of sharing sacred

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Students Attend SEEK Conference

Thousands of students inspired to live out the call to holiness

DANIEL SCHERMERHORN
Staff Writer

Over twenty-thousand college students from around the world traveled to Saint Louis, Missouri for the Fellowship of Catholic University Students' (FOCUS) annual SEEK conference. Through Campus Ministry, a contingent of 75 Notre Dame students took time out of their winter breaks to learn from the many renowned speakers, worship with thousands of the faithful, and converse with Catholic students and clergy from around the globe from January 1st–5th.

The theme of the conference, “Be The Light,” echoes the message of St. John Paul II during his historic visit to Saint Louis in 1999. JPII encouraged thousands present to be “children of the light.” At SEEK, the keynote speakers utilized JPII’s commission as a roadmap for living a life of holiness as college students.

Prominent Catholics such as Fr. Josh Johnson and Chris Stefanik spoke about the beauty of a genuine Catholic life. Father Mike Schmitz, host of the hit podcast *Bible in a Year*, led a Eucharistic procession and adoration in the former football stadium of the St. Louis Rams.

Fr. Mike preceded Eucharistic adoration by sharing an anecdote about his father, an avid runner

who suffered two major heart attacks while Fr. Mike was in college. Allegorizing the story, he told conference attendees, “No matter how far you run, you have a broken heart.” Fr. Mike then encouraged the thousands present to approach the Eucharist in one of two ways: by asking God to heal their sinful hearts, or even just contemplating their broken hearts that Christ came to redeem.

Cat LaPorte, a senior theology and Spanish major at Notre Dame, told the *Rover* that “one of the most impactful moments of the conference for me was [this] night of adoration mid-week, at which 24,000 Catholics of various ages and walks of life came together to worship Jesus present in the Eucharist.”

Notre Dame Campus Minister Brett Perkins told the *Rover*: “The witness of 22,000 students coming together to celebrate the sacraments—you just can’t get that anywhere else. Especially for students at secular universities, it is amazing to see that they’re not in this alone.” For Perkins, this year’s SEEK Conference was his sixth as campus minister. He noted that the conference does an excellent job of reaching out both to students struggling with their faith as well as those seeking encouragement to continue striving in the virtuous life.

Many at SEEK agreed that Monsignor James Shea,

President of the University of Mary in Bismarck, North Dakota, delivered the most captivating presentation of the entire conference. In his address, he boldly argued that many of the problems facing college students—loneliness, depression, despair—do not mean that a student is deficient in some way. Rather, he contended that being “ill at ease with our existence” may be the inevitable effect of growing up in a world without God. Shea juxtaposed this uneasiness with the “comfort and joy” that only hope in Christ can bring. Shea’s message was received with a lengthy standing ovation from the thousands present.

Throughout the conference, students had the opportunity to explore hundreds of opportunities for service, discernment, and learning. Leaders in Catholic media such as Hallow, Relevant Radio, and Exodus 90 sent representatives to show off their apps and resources. Participants could listen to many famous Catholic podcasts presented live at the conference including *Pints with*



Image by Irish Rover

Aquinas, Among the Lilies, and Man Catholic.

Religious orders came out in force to share their respective charisms and talk with young Catholics about vocational discernment. Notre Dame’s own Fr. John DeRiso, Director of the Office of Vocations for the Congregation of the Holy Cross in the US, attended the conference along with numerous Holy Cross seminarians to share the charism and work of the congregation. LaPorte said, “It was so uplifting to witness thousands of Catholics, in both religious and secular vocations striving to live out their personal

calls to holiness.”

If you would like to listen to any of the talks presented at SEEK24, they are available for free at the SEEK website. SEEK 2025 is scheduled for January 1st-5th in Salt Lake City.

Daniel Schermerhorn is a senior theology and computer engineering student who failed miserably at attempting to shake hands with Fr. Mike Schmitz after one of his talks. If you would like to share your condolences, please contact Daniel at dscherme@nd.edu.

Notre Dame Forum Hosts Steven Levitsky

Harvard professor warns of “imminent danger” in potential second Trump presidency

HALEY GARECHT
Staff Writer

Steven Levitsky, the David Rockefeller Professor of Latin American Studies and Professor of Government at Harvard, gave a keynote address on December 4 drawing on themes from his recent book *Tyranny of the Minority: Why American Democracy Reached the Breaking Point*. The event was a part of the Notre Dame Forum 2023–2024, “The Future of Democracy,” and was co-sponsored by the Kellogg Institute for International Studies.

At Harvard, Levitsky oversees the Center for Latin American Studies and lectures on comparative politics and global democratization. His research focuses on the rise and fall of democracies, authoritarianism, and political parties, particularly in Latin America. Along with *Tyranny of the Minority*, Levitsky co-authored *How Democracies Die* with fellow Harvard scholar Daniel Ziblatt.

University President Fr. John Jenkins, C.S.C. introduced the address to a packed room in McKenna Hall and stated that the point of the forum is “to form

respectful, informed dialogue” about democracy at home and abroad. Fr. Jenkins argued that although democracy has come under attack worldwide, the Catholic tradition encourages focus on the common good and “reach[ing] across party lines” in intellectual discussion.

Levitsky began his remarks with claims that the United States has been experiencing “democratic backsliding” since 2016. He pointed to the “Global Freedom Index,” on which the U.S. has dropped nine points since the 2010s, to support his argument. This deterioration, he added, is the result of the Constitution’s failure to adapt to the changing racial makeup of America.

Today, Levitsky said that the U.S. is undergoing a “historic transition” towards “multiracial democracy,” as evidenced by the growing diversity in Congress, the Supreme Court, and American culture as a whole. America’s newfound “multiracial democratic majority” has elicited a counter-reaction, says Levitsky: the pro-Trump sector of the Republican Party.

“One of our two major parties is no longer committed to playing by the democratic rules of the game,” Levitsky

claimed. He suggested that the Republican Party has violated democratic principles, led by former President Donald Trump. Worse, Levitsky claimed, “Republican politicians—or some of them—have also begun to flirt with violence.” He cited Kyle Rittenhouse, the McCloskey family of St. Louis, and Republican ads featuring guns as examples of this trend. Levitsky grounded this movement towards violence in the “outsized fear of losing” shared by Trump’s supporters in the party, demonstrated by the events of January 6, 2021.

Levitsky compared the current Republican Party to southern Democrats of the Reconstruction era: just as “Democrats abandoned any pretense of democracy” when black Americans were enfranchised, Levitsky said that Republicans “panicked” when they realized they were “winning the white vote but losing the American vote.” He then detailed the history of race and the Republican Party, from the successful “party of self-identified white Christians” to today’s Republicans, who have not won the popular vote since 2004. “Many Trump voters feel like they’re losing their country,”

Levitsky stated, “and that sense of loss has pushed many rank-and-file Republicans towards extremism.”

If anti-democratic Republicans are truly a minority, as Levitsky claims, how can they threaten democracy? Easily, Levitsky argued. He warned listeners that America is uniquely full of “counter-majoritarian institutions,” which allow a minority of far-right voters to wield “so much political power.” Levitsky listed several such “undemocratic institutions,” including the “malapportioned” U.S. Senate, electoral process, filibuster, and lifetime tenure of Supreme Court justices. He held that reforming these American institutions would realign America with other democracies and with the wishes of Founding Fathers such as James Madison and Alexander Hamilton.

Levitsky concluded his speech with a call to action for all Americans concerned about the state of American democracy. “We face an imminent authoritarian threat,” he said, in the person of Donald Trump. Levitsky asserted that no candidate since World War II—even Putin—has been as openly authoritarian as Trump,

who Levitsky believes will use federal agencies to prosecute his critics and antagonistic media outlets. To combat this threat, Levitsky said that politicians must form a “coalition” across party lines and avoid a “slide into minority rule.”

The address concluded with a Q&A session hosted by Christina Wolbrecht, Professor of Political Science and the C. Robert and Margaret Hanley Family Director of the Notre Dame Washington Program. The Notre Dame Forum will continue on February 14 with “Liberal Democracy & The Catholic Church in a Change of Era,” a lecture on global Catholicism’s role in great power politics.

Haley Garecht is a sophomore studying political science and minoring in constitutional studies and Irish studies. Currently, she is living in D.C. as a member of the Washington Program, where she is still struggling to navigate the Metro and mourning the end of the Eagles’ season. Please send any tips, condolences, or comments to hgarecht@nd.edu.



PayPal Founder Peter Thiel Visits Notre Dame

Billionaire reflects on the negative impacts of DEI in conversation with Patrick Deneen

PJ BUTLER
Politics Editor

Peter Thiel, the founder of PayPal and Palantir Technologies, delivered a lecture in the Mendoza College of Business on January 23. In his remarks, Thiel argued that the emphasis placed on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in higher education and business has distracted America from the pursuit of more valuable human goods. Patrick Deneen, Professor of Political Science at Notre Dame, arranged Thiel's visit and hosted a sit-down conversation with the Silicon Valley billionaire following his lecture.

Thiel, who identified himself as an "unreconstructed libertarian" during the event, suggested that "a group of people who look different but think alike" does not constitute real diversity. "Diversity is not just hiring the extras from the space cantina scene in *Star Wars*," he quipped.

He also focused on the overlap between the American real estate crisis and the rise of identity politics. The correlation "doesn't prove that identity politics were a conspiracy by urban slumlords," Thiel admitted. "But on the other hand—when you have trillions of dollars at stake—I would say it's always somewhat odd not to ask the question."

With the 370-seat Jordan Auditorium at full capacity, Thiel opened with a reflection on the college campus dynamics that informed his 1995 book *The Diversity Myth*, co-written with fellow "PayPal Mafia" member and Stanford alumnus David Sacks. From there, the core of his lecture explored the influence of DEI and "wokeness" on three different domains: economics, science, and religion.

A Marxist perspective shaped Thiel's first economic critique of the diversity narrative. Identity politics, he claimed, divides and distracts the working class from



Image by Patrick Deneen on X

their real economic interests. The "reactionary" agenda of DEI amounts to "a form of crony capitalism. It's in roughly the same category as a bank robber or a prostitute or something like that, where you're just part of an extremely dysfunctional capitalist racket."

Turning to the diversity narrative's negative impact on science, Thiel recalled his well-known thesis on technological stagnation. In the past fifty years, he explained, "There has been a narrow cone of progress on bits, computers, the internet, and maybe now AI." The world of atoms, however, has witnessed a far slower era of innovation.

Thiel suggested that even though the poor condition of the humanities may be apparent to outside observers, the less obvious effects of DEI on science carry far greater negative consequences. To illustrate his point, he contrasted the functionality of government-run entities such as the DMV or the Post Office with the National Security Agency. "The one where you can see the incompetence of the agency is actually the one that has the most integrity," Thiel

said. While the NSA appears to operate smoothly from the outside because of its scientific veneer and crypsis, he suggested that the agency "is probably really, really badly run in a way that is sort of analogous to the science question."

Relating his argument about the decline of science to Deneen's own thesis about the failure of liberalism, Thiel asked, "What took so long for liberalism to fail? You have all these contradictions, and they've been around for three hundred years. Why wasn't it obvious already in 1750 that it was on a bad arc and was leading to worse functioning individuals, families, or communities and all these things?" He hypothesized that the progress and steady improvement of people's material conditions obscured the erosion of other elements necessary for human flourishing chronicled in Deneen's works.

The final area of Thiel's lecture focused on diversity as both a distraction from as well as an outgrowth of Christianity. Thiel, who was influenced by Catholic philosopher and anthropologist René Girard as an undergraduate

at Stanford, related the biblical insistence on the innocence of the victim to a potential Christian temptation towards wokeness.

Finally, Thiel reoriented his focus back to politics, tracing the origins of the phrase "political correctness" back to Stalinism in the 1950s. In closing, he suggested, "Every time you hear 'DEI,' just think CCP."

Following the end of his lecture, Thiel and Deneen had a conversation about recent political developments. Deneen cited the growing number of prominent voices on the left voicing concerns about diversity programs, including hedge fund manager and longtime Democratic Party donor Bill Ackman, as evidence of a decline in support for DEI initiatives. Thiel responded with optimism that some of the worst aspects of diversity and inclusion programs could potentially be rolled back.

Despite being hosted in the largest lecture hall at the Mendoza College of Business, the event was not sponsored by an academic department. Instead, Deneen arranged the lecture independently after having

met Thiel at a dinner party in Washington, D.C. After the two shared a lively conversation in the nation's capital, the billionaire expressed interest in coming to Notre Dame. In addition to the public lecture, Thiel also spoke to Deneen's "Liberalism and Its Discontents" seminar the following day.

"I was gratified that many students I spoke with afterwards were deeply impressed by the example of someone who is at once immensely successful but clearly loves the intellectual life," Deneen stated. "Thiel could have been anywhere on the planet last week, and he chose to spend several days in cold, rainy, icy, dreary South Bend because he wanted to engage with a Notre Dame professor and his students."

Sophomore Molly Foote echoed Deneen's sentiment, speaking positively of the billionaire's visit. "Thiel's remarks underscored the interconnectedness between economics, business, science, politics, and faith. I'd be happy to welcome him back to Notre Dame."

Deneen added, "If nothing else, whether people agreed with him or not, I hope his visit served as a reminder of Aristotle's teaching that money is merely a means—and often a corrupting one—and that the pursuit of wisdom is a main purpose for a flourishing human life."

PJ Butler is a senior with majors in political science and theology and a minor in constitutional studies. While some would label him as a reprehensible "Disney Adult," he promises that he only really cares about Walt's unbuilt EPCOT City and dark rides filled with Audio-Animatronics. To hear why he thinks Bob Iger and Josh D'Amaro should be fired, send him an email at pbutler3@nd.edu.

Choirs

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music with many others." Pangan highlights the tour's impact both on the choir's social and spiritual lives, emphasizing the trip as a "golden opportunity to build community with each other so that our ministries may bless our lives, not only spiritually, but also relationally and socially."

Regardless of the group's size or setbacks, the choir returned to campus feeling largely successful in its endeavor to bring sacred music to the Southeast. As Conaway remarked, the trip "foster[ed] a unique bond" among singers "in a way that regular rehearsals and performances don't. ... The tour was a unique and gratifying experience, and I'm grateful to have been a part of it." The Liturgical Choir plans to utilize

the momentum acquired on its tour throughout the spring semester, which—in addition to its customary participation in Holy Week services—will culminate in an unprecedented Palm Sunday performance of Mozart's Requiem.

While the Liturgical Choir was busy in the Southeast, 48 members of the Notre Dame Folk Choir spent their last week of Christmas break touring throughout the Midwest. The choir sang a setlist of 13 hymns and spirituals—including original compositions by their Grammy-winning director—throughout Indiana, Ohio, and Michigan.

The Folk Choir's mission, as summarized by director Dr. J.J. Wright, is to "bridge the gap between contemporary compositions of a post-Vatican II church community and the rich expression of traditional choral

repertoire." This Christmas break, the group aimed to bolster their mission by singing traditional choral concerts at churches around the Midwest, as well as concerts in secular spaces like De La Salle High School in Warren, Michigan.

The group's members, affectionately nicknamed "Folkheads," gathered to rehearse at the Sacred Heart Parish Center on Sunday before departing on the tour, and the group's energy was palpable. "One of the things that I love most about Folk Choir tour is how close everyone gets," Thomas Mazzurana, the tour's coordinator and a sophomore tenor, told the *Rover*. "It was really nice to see the whole tour come to fruition."

The tour's concerts were well attended throughout the course of the week, with a strong showing from recent graduates of the choir, who not only attended the concerts

but also consistently provided beds to the 48 touring singers. Maria Everett, a senior from St. Mary's College, remarked to the *Rover* that one choir alumnus host told her "about how alive the Folk Choir community still is in her life."

Since providing music for Mass is the choir's primary ministry, choir members found it fitting that the week of fun, song, and prayer concluded with Mass celebrated by Bishop Kevin Rhoades at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Fort Wayne, IN.

Despite the long and largely sleepless trip, Joe Robuck, a freshman in the choir studying biology, told the *Rover* that the tour was possible only because of the group's strong community: "If it was any other group, I wouldn't be able to perform everyday on an average of 3 hours of sleep every night."

After their successful tours, the choirs have returned to their weekly liturgies, and will continue to sing in preparation for oncoming Holy Week.

Mattie Lossing is a junior studying political science and theology. If you want to chat with her about the radically Catholic ontological assertions of the "Barbie" movie, you can contact her at mlossing@nd.edu.

Liam Schlosser is a sophomore in the joint major of theology and philosophy. When not making the most of the free espresso machine in the Sorin Fellows lounge, he can be contacted at lschloss@nd.edu.



Trump Wins in Iowa and New Hampshire

Former president sweeps early contests as he moves closer to GOP nomination

SHRI THAKUR
Staff Writer

Former President Donald Trump cemented his frontrunner status in the Republican presidential primaries with decisive victories in the Iowa caucuses on January 15 and the New Hampshire primary on January 23. The primary field, which began with over a dozen candidates, has narrowed to just two: Trump and former U.S. ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley. The next contests in the race will take place in Nevada and South Carolina in February.

Since announcing his campaign in November 2022 after the midterm elections, Trump has consistently led in public opinion polling, though Florida Governor Ron DeSantis ran closely behind him at the onset of the race. Trump was the first major Republican to announce his candidacy for president and was later followed by 12 other candidates, including DeSantis, former Vice President Mike Pence, former New Jersey Governor Chris Christie, entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy, and Nikki Haley.

By the fall of 2023, Trump had consolidated his lead in the polls and held consistent advantages in the early nominating states, building large leads in Iowa, New Hampshire, Nevada, and South Carolina. In the lead-up to the Iowa caucus, just four candidates remained in the race: Trump, Haley, DeSantis, and Ramaswamy.

The January 15 Iowa caucus was the first contest of the primary cycle. The state was seen as a must-win for DeSantis, who had the support of much of the state's political establishment, including

Governor Kim Reynolds. In a contest described by *National Review* as DeSantis' "Waterloo," the Florida governor placed his hopes for victory in Iowa on support from socially conservative evangelicals and college-educated voters. Entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy also campaigned heavily in the state, visiting every one of Iowa's 99 counties at least two times. In contrast, former President Trump and Ambassador Haley held fewer events, though both increased their presence on the ground in the week leading up to the caucuses.

In the end, Waterloo proved an apt analogy for DeSantis. The former president crushed DeSantis by 30 points, winning every county in the state except for Johnson County, which he lost to Nikki Haley by just one vote. Entrance polls of the caucus showed Trump dominating with every demographic group, especially women, evangelicals, voters without a college degree, and those who described themselves as "very conservative."

Vivek Ramaswamy immediately suspended his campaign after a distant fourth place finish and endorsed Trump. DeSantis initially vowed to stay in the race, arguing that he had "punched his ticket out of Iowa," but suspended his campaign six days later on January 21 and pledged to support Trump. Final results showed Trump winning 51% of the vote to 21.2% for DeSantis, 19.1% for Haley, and 7.7% for Ramaswamy. Turnout, which was significantly down from past caucuses, was likely dampened by historic freezing temperatures.

Zane Zachary, a Notre Dame sophomore who interned for the DeSantis campaign, reacted to

news of the Florida governor's departure from the race (and consequent loss of his internship via a Twitter video) with disappointment. Nevertheless, he acknowledged that the announcement was "inevitable" due to DeSantis' poor performance in Iowa. He said that he still believes that DeSantis "remains a highly qualified candidate" and hopes that he "plays a significant role in the next Republican presidential administration." He added that he now plans to vote for Donald Trump in the primary of his home state, Colorado, assuming Trump is reinstated on the ballot there.

A little over a week later, the race—now a showdown between Trump and Haley—moved to New Hampshire. The Haley campaign justified their relatively light presence in Iowa with a big bet on winning in the Granite State. New Hampshire Governor Chris Sununu, a Haley supporter, confidently predicted that she would "win in a landslide." Some polls of the state had Haley within striking distance of Trump due to her strong support among independents and moderate Republicans, two groups that make up a large share of the New Hampshire electorate. New Hampshire's semi-closed primary, which allows unaffiliated voters to participate in the primary of their choice, was also viewed as favorable for Haley.

If Iowa was DeSantis' Waterloo, New Hampshire might have ended up as Haley's Battle of the Bulge. Trump won convincingly, beating Haley by 11 points and over 36,000 votes and dominating in traditionally conservative areas of the state. Haley, aided by the crossover votes of Democrat-leaning voters, won in some urban

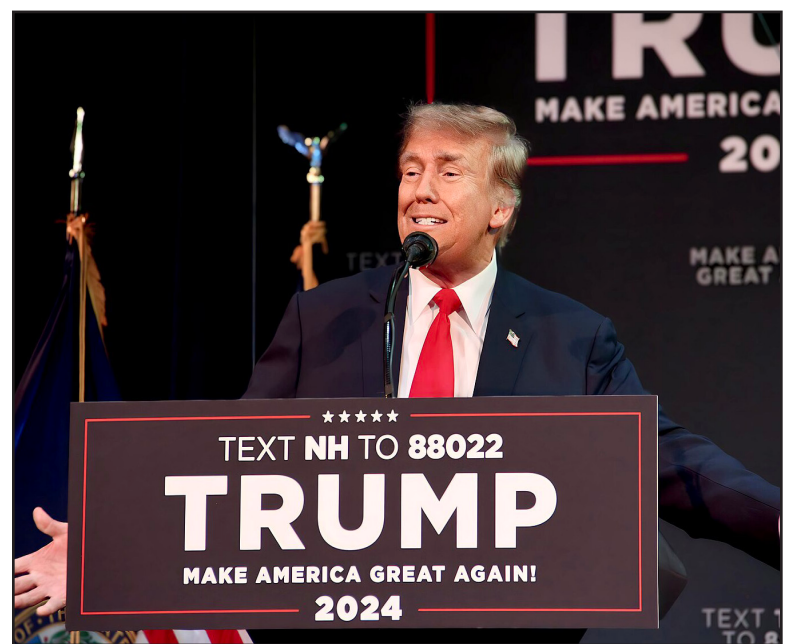


Image from Wikimedia Commons

areas such as Concord and Dover as well as liberal strongholds like Hanover. Exit polls showed Trump performing best with young voters, registered Republicans, those who supported a federal ban on abortion, and weekly churchgoers. Haley did best with self-identified Democrats, college-graduates, and those who cited foreign policy as their top issue. After the race was called, Haley vowed to continue her campaign into South Carolina while Trump called on her to drop out.

Next month's contests include the Nevada caucus on February 8 and the South Carolina primary on February 24. Both campaigns have placed a special emphasis on winning South Carolina, where Haley served as governor from 2011 to 2017. However, polls show an overwhelming lead for Trump in the state; the polling aggregate FiveThirtyEight shows Trump up 37 points on Haley and holding steady with 62% of the vote. Unlike Iowa and New Hampshire, Trump

also enjoys the nearly unanimous support of the state's Republican establishment, including the endorsements of Governor Henry McMaster and Senators Lindsey Graham and Tim Scott.

With South Carolina's position as simultaneously both the last stand of anti-Trump forces and also a relatively uncompetitive contest, Trump appears set to face Joe Biden again in a rematch this November. If there's one thing Americans have learned over the last eight years, it's that anything can happen in politics. But to quote Taylor Swift, one can't be blamed for beginning to wonder—"Is It Over Now?"

Shri Thakur is a sophomore studying economics with a minor in Constitutional Studies. When he's not meticulously tracking 2024 election polls, he can usually be found watching an old-fashioned movie. He can be reached at sthakur3@nd.edu.

What Are Anti-SLAPP Statutes?

A brief history of a powerful legal remedy to baseless suits

CATALINA SCHEIDER GALIÑANES
Staff Writer

Professor Tamara Kay's defamation lawsuit against the *Irish Rover* was dismissed by the St. Joseph County, Indiana Superior Court on January 8, 2024 under Indiana's Anti-SLAPP law. Anti-SLAPP statutes are a remedy to SLAPP suits, or Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation. SLAPP suits lack any true legal claim and typically entail allegations of defamation, libel, and emotional distress. They are often brought against journalists, usually resulting in lengthy and expensive legal proceedings.

Thirty-three states as well as the District of Columbia currently have Anti-SLAPP statutes, but the actual content of the laws varies significantly. Some states apply Anti-SLAPP statutes only in cases of retaliation for petitioning the government, whereas in California, "the laws broadly protect speech made in connection with a public

issue," according to the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press.

Regardless of their scope, Anti-SLAPP laws provide journalists with an avenue towards a quick dismissal prior to undergoing the costly legal discovery process. Many statutes also provide the opportunity for defendants to recover attorney fees and costs. Anti-SLAPP laws aim to prevent the silencing of journalists engaged in controversial reporting and help to mitigate the risk of costly and ultimately baseless litigation.

Indiana's Anti-SLAPP law was enacted in 1998. Found in Indiana Code § 34-7-7-1 et seq., it states that "any conduct in furtherance of free speech or petition in connection with a public issue or issue of public interest, is protected." In addition to shielding journalists and other news reporters from the burden of expensive legal proceedings, Anti-SLAPP laws also protect against the chilling of free speech and free press.

In 2019, Nancy Chapman, a journalist from Connecticut running a nonprofit news website, published an article about a local political candidate's past arrests. She was sued for invasion of privacy and emotional distress. For an independent journalist like Mrs. Chapman, the cost of the suit would have put her out of business.

In a similar case, the *Kansas City Star* was sued for defamation by a state senator in response to a 2019 article that criticized his position on Medicare. Because the information published was true and relevant to the public interest in both cases, the lawsuits were dismissed early through Anti-SLAPP statutes. When the June 2023 SLAPP lawsuit against the *Irish Rover* was dismissed in early January, it became the latest instance of Anti-SLAPP laws protecting journalists from baseless accusations.

The *Irish Rover's* case was peculiar among Anti-SLAPP litigation because it entailed a professor suing

a student newspaper at her own institution. Student journalists more often face litigation from parties outside the university. A related high-profile case occurred at Tufts University in 2022, when a local landlord sued the student newspaper, the *Tufts Daily*, for defamation and emotional distress following their coverage of a local protest at his business. Their case was quickly dismissed, since their coverage of his statements was deemed to be accurate and, therefore, not defamation.

Similarly, a 2020 lawsuit against The Maroon at Loyola University of New Orleans was brought by Sonya Duhé, the director of the Loyola's School of Communication and Design. The newspaper had covered complaints by students claiming that Director Duhé made racist remarks, and Duhé sued for defamation. The case was also recently dismissed in 2023 under Louisiana's Anti-SLAPP statute.

In the recent case brought against the *Irish Rover* by Professor Tamara

Kay, Indiana's Anti-SLAPP Statute protected the *Rover's* freedom of speech. The court ruled that the two articles cited in Dr. Kay's suit were protected as "free speech... in connection with a public issue or issue of public interest." The court deemed that "the alleged defamatory statements were true, within the meaning of the law, not made with actual malice, and did not contain a defamatory inference, and there were no damages that were causally linked to the *Irish Rover* articles." For these reasons, Judge Steven Davis ruled that Kay's defamation claim "fails as a matter of law."

Catalina Scheider Galiñanes is a junior from the Washington, D.C. area majoring in economics and political science with a minor in constitutional studies. She is available to discuss liberalism, Virginia elections, and country music at cscheid2@nd.edu.

Winter Culture Collection

Nico Schmitz

Editor-in-Chief

Knute Rockne: All American (Lloyd Bacon)

This 1940 classic film on the life of legendary football coach Knute Rockne ought to be required viewing for every Notre Dame undergraduate student. Like *Rudy*, the film features classic shots of campus and thrilling scenes on the football field, but *Knute Rockne: All American* is truly about Our Lady’s university, rather than a film just about football. Throughout the film the Alma Mater almost exclusively plays in the background, played at different speeds to depict the mood of the respective scene. The movie follows the life story of Rockne, or “Rock,” demonstrating how at each and every turn of his life he sought to cultivate virtue, simplicity, and leadership in his commitment to the university and his vocation. The closing scene of the movie depicts Rockne’s funeral at the Basilica of the Sacred Heart, reinforcing this narrative. As the camera pans to shots of the basilica and the choir sings angelic-like hymns, the eulogist puts it best: “Knute Rockne might have gone to any university in the land and been gladly received and forever cherished there, but he chose Our Lady’s school. He honored her in the monogram he earned and wore. He honored her in the principles and in the ideals he set up in the lives of young men under his care. He was, indeed, her true son.” This 99-minute film will not disappoint.

Bridgette Rodgers

Culture Editor

It Happened on 5th Avenue (Roy Del Ruth)

This 1947 Christmas classic appears to focus on the difficult life of a homeless man named Aloysius “Mac” McKeever at first. But, as the scenes progress, it becomes a lively, heart-warming tale of love and laughter. During the winter months, Mac resides in an empty mansion on 5th Avenue, owned by the esteemed Michael O’Connor. Mac refers to the home as his own and invites his new friend, Jim, a recently evicted veteran, to stay with him. The O’Connor family is unaware of Mac’s yearly tradition, so when Trudy, Michael’s daughter, arrives, she is surprised to find herself a guest in her own home. Although initially stunned by a squatter in her home, she sees the goodness within Mac and decides to conceal her true identity. The situational comedy is furthered by the arrival of Michael O’Connor himself. As he attends to business, which creates conflict within the film, the charade continues, filled with emotionally intense moments. Through an endless supply of hilarious coincidental occurrences, Trudy falls in love with Jim, and Mac never discovers the identity of his “house guests.” This film encapsulates all the wonderful things about Christmas: family, love, and laughter.

Elizabeth Hale

Managing Editor

The Trial (Franz Kafka)

A deeply unsettling novel about the trial of Josef K., *The Trial* by Franz Kafka brings its reader to consider the nature of freedom and condemnation and how these operate within a civil structure. At the beginning of the novel, Josef is placed under arrest, but he knows nothing of the clandestine court that has arrested him. He does not even know the charges against which he must defend himself. In a way that is reminiscent of Raskolnikov, Josef is left a physically free man, but he is trapped by the mere awareness of his arrest and his obsession with his acquittal. Josef’s slow descent into mania and powerlessness is a sobering and thought-provoking view into how the human psyche responds to guilt, innocence, and imprisonment.

Michael Canady

Campus Co-Editor

Boys in the Boat (George Clooney)

Based on the equally captivating book by Daniel James Brown, this film tells the inspiring story of Joe Rantz and the University of Washington rowing team’s journey to the 1936 Berlin Olympics. *Boys in the Boat* provides a message of sacrifice and humility that is unfortunately rare in today’s film culture, while also being filled with the same stirring patriotic fervor as *Top Gun: Maverick* or *Saving Private Ryan*. Although the book tells the complete background story of Joe’s upbringing, the movie still captures the same underdog mentality that is the foundation of the team’s passion. By the end of the movie, you, like the boys from Washington, will realize that “it’s not about you, me, or anybody else. It’s about the boat.”

Kephas Olsson

Religion Editor

The Unintended Reformation (Brad Gregory)

A brilliant dive into the causes and effects of the Reformation by the renowned Notre Dame professor Brad Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation* traces various aspects of modernity to the Reformation, arguing that its unintended consequences include hyper-pluralistic morality, secularism, and consumerist capitalism. Gregory writes, “The Western world today is an extraordinarily complex, tangled product of rejections, retentions, and transformations of medieval Western Christianity, in which the Reformation era constitutes the critical watershed.” The work is masterful in its scope and potently argues not only that current cultural realities are dependent on contingent historical occurrences, but also that understanding those occurrences is crucial if we aim to understand the foundations of modernity. *The Unintended Reformation* is a must read for anyone wishing to understand the complex interrelation of religion, philosophy, history, and politics in the modern West—a West deeply rooted in unintended consequences of the Reformation.

PJ Butler

Politics Editor

TRON Lightcycle / Run (Walt Disney World Resort)

The newest major attraction at Walt Disney World brings the excitement of the Grid to Tomorrowland at The Magic Kingdom. Though the roller coaster was first announced in 2017 with a scheduled premiere in 2021, construction delays (and cuts to Disney’s capital expenditures) delayed the ride’s opening until April 2023. The clone of the Shanghai Disneyland headliner makes for a strong addition to the lineup of the world’s most-visited theme park with its unique vehicles and Daft Punk soundtrack. The ride duration is short—only a minute long from the launch to the breaks. Nevertheless, getting “digitized” and hopping onto a Light Cycle like Sam Flynn provides a form of childhood wish fulfillment unlike anything you’ve ever experienced. If you’re able, ride at night for views of the mesmerizing Upload Conduit light show. With TRON Lightcycle / Run, the Grid is at long last open for Programs and Users alike. End of line.

James Whitaker

Humor Editor

The Napoleon of Notting Hill (G. K. Chesterton)

In 1906, Chesterton wrote this satire of London culture, set in the year 1984—legend has it that Orwell’s own *1984* was inspired by Chesterton’s work. The story is set in a London that “had lost faith in revolutions. Democracy was dead; for no one minded the governing class governing. England was now practically a despotism, but not an hereditary one. Someone in the official class was made King. No one cared how: No one cared who. He was merely a universal secretary.” His premise kicks off a wonderfully far-fetched story of Auberon Quin, the king of England, who amuses himself by forcing London back into the garb, customs, and romance of medieval England. His joke spirals out of hand, however, when Adam Wayne doesn’t see the joke; rather, Wayne fights to defend the honor of his little neighborhood of Notting Hill when it is threatened.

Madeline Murphy

Copy Editor

Hamilton (Lin-Manuel Miranda)

This 2015 musical gained almost-instant popularity and has remained in the light since then. *Hamilton* tells the story of Founding Father Alexander Hamilton through a surprising medium: hip-hop and rap music. Wars and duels depicted through modern dance and bright flashes of light draw young audiences into this (semi-accurate) historical narrative. The show does not solely exist for entertainment or historical value, though; it has a moral undercurrent. As Hamilton struggles to balance the demands of founding a nation and fathering a family, he falls into an affair. After his wife, Eliza, discovers his infidelity, she is filled with pain, and lives coldly with him. As they mutually mourn the death of their son, Eliza moves past her resentment and forgives her unfaithful husband. Despite significant damage to their marriage, they are eventually able to love and accompany each other again through the power of forgiveness.

Madelyn Stout

Layout Manager

The Martian (Andy Weir)

Andy Weir’s novel *The Martian* features a situation no human being wishes to endure—complete, utter aloneness. The year is 2035, and Astronaut Mark Watney finds himself marooned on Mars, hoping to survive four years until the next NASA mission to the barren red planet. Equipped with a knack for fixing things, a few potatoes, some botanical skills, and the knowledge that he is all by himself on a wasteland of a planet, Mark must find a way to stay alive. With his crew unaware of his status, it’s not just the old adage of man versus nature that Mark must confront, but so too the realization that he is his only companion, only hope, and only chance at complete survival. Sure, Mark is “pretty much *****,” as the novel’s first lines state, but Weir’s combination of witty quips with scientific language and geekery makes for a fascinating read for anyone who enjoys science fiction.

Kateri Castillo

Webmaster

Formula 1: Drive to Survive (Netflix and Formula One)

The documentary series, *Formula 1: Drive to Survive*, produced by Netflix and Formula One, brings viewers a behind-the-scenes look at the cars, drivers, and races that make up the Formula One World Championship. This binge-worthy series is perfect for both racing and non-racing fans alike, as it focuses not only on the car races itself, but the people behind each car. Each episode provides the viewer with an in-depth look at a certain aspect of the Formula One World Championship, such as Red Bull’s racing strategy, Mercedes’ car performance problems, or the expectations that rookie Haas’ driver, Mick Schumacher, has to face from being the son of the legendary Michael Schumacher. *Formula 1: Drive to Survive* ultimately leaves each viewer with a greater respect for the engineers and drivers behind each car, and a desire to see the beauty and danger of a Formula One race live.



Cars 3: The Gears of Progress

Technological advance as the instrument of liberal repression

NICO SCHMITZ & LUKE THOMPSON

Editor-In-Chief & Campus Co-Editor



Editor's Note: This piece is best read after the Rover's analysis of Cars and Cars 2.

In *Cars 3*, the liberal regime is back to finish what it started. After Radiator Springs staved off its seemingly inevitable death at the hands of 'progress' in the original film, the sequel revealed that this survival was far from guaranteed by Lightning McQueen's fame and friendship.

Cars 3 confirms this revelation: The logic of the liberal regime invades the comfort of Radiator Springs and the domestic sphere of racing itself, as unceasing technological progress begins to destabilize the happy equilibrium that Lightning McQueen's racing career has provided the community.

In a welcome shift back to the trilogy's traditional spirit, the movie begins with McQueen preparing for another race in the Piston Cup Series. The film invokes an attempt to return to its roots in the opening scene, as McQueen delivers his famous lines of self-motivation: "Speed. I am speed." Though everything appears the same, in reality, it is entirely different. Immediately, McQueen has a moment of self-doubt, remarking in disbelief: "Did I used to say that?"

The reason for the self-doubt is simple enough. It is an all-too-familiar story to sports fans—an all-time great is aging and will soon be surpassed by young up-and-comers. But these upstarts are not simply younger and more energetic, they are portrayed as the beneficiaries of a new training system guided by state-of-the-art technology and scientific precision. Furthermore, in a world inhabited by cars, the newest vehicles have the advantage of technological superiority over the previous generation.

Within 10 minutes of the film's beginning, McQueen's world is upended. McQueen pushes himself to his limits in an attempt to catch up to these "next-generation" racers. The broadcaster screams, "McQueen is fading! McQueen is fading!" and the audience is moved to tears as his tires explode and a nearly fatal crash sends McQueen soaring through the air.

There is no reward for McQueen in his dotage for his accomplishments. He fades into complete obsolescence in a world that no longer resembles the one in which he was raised

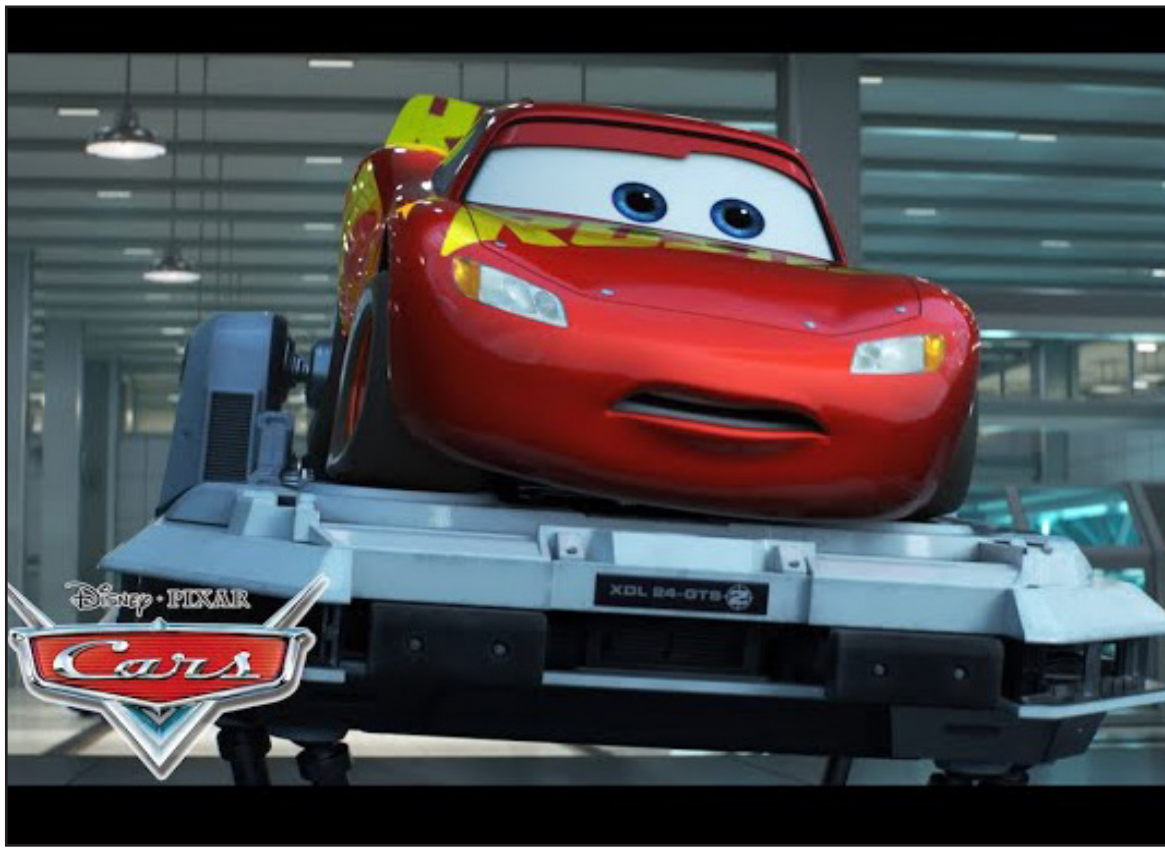


Image by Walt Disney

and achieved greatness.

Moreover, an even gloomier destiny looms for the town. The devastation that was accomplished by the town's circumvention by the interstate highway (a major theme of the first movie and article in this series, if you are unfamiliar with either) was merely temporarily delayed by Lightning McQueen's fortuitous embrace of the town and the economic boost that his fame delivered the community. Now that McQueen himself has been discarded by the liberal regime, the process can be completed.

Through the lens of liberalism, the small town in the Arizona desert appears only as an inefficient agglomeration of individuals who would better serve themselves and the economy by uprooting their shared life together and moving to a larger urban center. Obviously, this is not what the residents desire. They value their relationships with one another and the way of life that they create.

Liberalism promises to allow people to choose what relationships they value most. But by reframing all relationships as chosen—and, additionally, incentivizing temporary and fungible relationships within a market that rewards fluidity and punishes fixity—it destroyed the essential permanence of relationships, taking with it the very neutrality of the political system towards individuals' choices that it sought to create. Thus, in promising to allow people to choose what relationships they value most, liberalism has made it impossible for the citizens of Radiator Springs to choose the very community they love.

With these tensions at hand, at this point the film presents itself as relatively interesting

and thought-provoking, answering the question: 'How is man supposed to adapt to the modern world?' Following McQueen's decision to continue his racing career, the viewer embarks on a quest of self-discovery in the face of progress.

For a time, the film flirts with an embrace of tradition, community, and resilience in the face of undesirable progress. McQueen, now a mature sentimentalist, turns to old film of his former coach and racing legend, Doc Hudson, for inspiration. In light of his reflections on Doc, he begins to ask bigger questions about what it means to lead a life outside of racing. McQueen then turns to his memories of racing on "sacred dirt" for a renewal of strength in deciding what his future might be. Finally, he explores the richness of the provincial American lifestyle through participating in the Thunder Hollow demolition derby in a small rural town, seeking the mentorship of Doc Hudson's old-timer competitors tucked away in the Appalachian mountains.

During this nostalgic segment of the film, the audience feels as if the *Cars* universe has come home from its devastating globalist excursion in *Cars 2*. For a fleeting moment, there is hope for both Radiator Springs and this liberal world. Emboldened by the tradition, guidance, and spirit of those that came before him, McQueen is poised to win his upcoming race against the technologically superior vehicles.

For just this moment, all seems right with the world. But then, quicker than one could say "Kachow!", the unyielding power of the modern liberal world suddenly is unleashed.

The film suggests that there is no legitimate solution to the problem posed by progress that is grounded in tradition. The movie instead turns towards the story of a Latina trainer named Cruz Ramirez for its answer. Never before seen or mentioned in the *Cars* universe, Ramirez is assigned to be McQueen's trainer during his rehabilitation process. She follows him for the majority of the film as a particularly obnoxious and uninspiring side character who, though frequently present, does very little to attract the attention of the viewer.

Instead of fighting against the logic of liberalism and attempting to return to prominence as a racer using the time-tested methods Doc Hudson taught him, the film's uplifting ending centers around the unexpected success of Cruz Ramirez. After McQueen lashes out at Ramirez on one occasion, she expresses that she actually wanted to become a race car when she was younger but was prevented, in her view, due to her race and gender.

By the end of the movie, it is she, overcoming this perceived injustice, who rises to the top of the racing world—not McQueen. During the film's final race, McQueen decides that Ramirez should finish in his stead. Just a few minutes later, the *Cars* trilogy concludes with a random, inexperienced character winning the race against all of the next-generation racers. Although there is much to celebrate in Ramirez's victory, this shift in focus causes the real problems facing McQueen, Radiator Springs, and the whole *Cars* universe to fade into the background.

Instead of dealing with the very serious problems caused by liberalism that the

film implicitly identifies, the plot turns towards further liberalization in one particular sphere of society.

Josh Spiegel, a writer for The Hollywood Reporter, is one of many national film critics who praised this shift. He explains that "because of her gender or her race compared to those of Lightning, Cruz accepted that she would have to scale down her ambitions if she wanted even a modicum of success in the world of racing." Spiegel affirms the film's implicit suggestion that the only way forward for the modern car is further self-actualization beyond the natural bounds of a given community. Other publications recognized this theme, arguing that Cruz Ramirez rightfully depicts the struggles of the queer communities of America, with some outlets even describing Cruz as a "lesbian."

One can celebrate Ramirez's victory against alleged injustice, but the looming problems facing Radiator Springs and McQueen do not disappear in the slightest. Radiator Springs will still struggle to survive (the lack of children in the town, perhaps due to its economic struggles, testify to this in addition to the problems addressed head-on in the first film). McQueen will still struggle to find his place in a world he barely recognizes. And the racing world, especially the generations following McQueen, will encounter further technological upheaval, eventually subjecting the current upstarts to the same ill-treatment and disorientation that McQueen suffered at the end of his career. One can distract oneself from liberalism's problems by fighting for victories over the remaining obstacles to complete individual liberation. But this diversion will not lessen the urgency of countering the destructive processes that liberalism initiated. Radiator Springs needs more than a nice story.

Nico Schmitz is a senior from Pasadena, California in the majoring in the Program of Liberal Studies and Luke Thompson is a senior from Flagstaff, Arizona majoring in the Program of Liberal Studies, political science, and theology. They recently encountered the origins of *Cars* on a train from Los Angeles to South Bend, Indiana this January, subverting disturbing technological advances and experiencing the nostalgia of the American Frontier. They can be reached at nschmit2@nd.edu and lthomp7@nd.edu



Cavanaugh Hall Reflects on Fr. Bob

Residents comment on their priest in residence and new university president

ELIZABETH MITCHELL
Staff Writer

Notre Dame announced its selection of Father Robert Dowd as its next president via press release on December 4, 2023. To most students on campus, Fr. Dowd is known as the Vice President and Associate Provost for Interdisciplinary Initiatives, but to the residents of Cavanaugh Hall, he is more affectionately referred to as Fr. Bob, their priest in residence.

Upon hearing the news of Fr. Bob's appointment, the women of Cavanaugh Hall were ecstatic. Cavanaugh resident Kate Garcia described to the *Rover* how she immediately wanted to extend a gesture of support for her priest in residence, and in the process she found another girl already busy decorating his door. Garcia commented, "It's great having Fr. Bob in the dorm. It's always a joy to see him around, and we are so honored to have him represent Cavanaugh!"

Although many of the residents, such as sophomore Mary Elizabeth Balof, had "heard through the grape-vine" that he would be selected as president, they nonetheless felt a sense of solidarity within their community on the day of his appointment, joining together all members of the residence hall in celebration. Junior Sydney O'Malley attests to the unifying

force of the news, stating that she "felt a sense of unity and strength within Cavanaugh Hall" upon the appointment.

According to the women of Cavanaugh Hall, Fr. Bob is a skilled community builder who is committed to the students. O'Malley told the *Rover*, "Fr. Dowd prioritizes the Notre Dame community and everyone he encounters. I am confident that [he] will guide our community in harnessing our Catholic background and beliefs to contribute positively to those around us." He has made efforts to get to know each of the residents personally, whether before interhall sports matches, or while drinking smoothies after Mass.

Many of the women referenced his positive qualities such as "making everyone feel important and listened to." The residents also commented on how Fr. Bob "takes the time to talk to everyone" and "truly is interested in hearing about our lives and activities."

One resident remarked, "I value Father Dowd's genuine concern for how Notre Dame students can leave a lasting, positive impact on their environment." Other residents confirmed this sentiment, noting how Fr. Bob is a person who not only values the unique gifts the students can bring, but also seeks to have them cultivate those talents in meaningful ways.



Image by Cavanaugh Hall on Instagram

Father Bob also is an avid supporter of the Cavanaugh flag football team. Praying with and cheering on the players from the sidelines, he encouraged the team throughout the entirety of their championship match this past season. Due to his active involvement in residential life, it came as no surprise when Fr. Bob announced he would be continuing to reside in Cavanaugh even after he begins his role as president.

Garcia told the *Rover* how she has seen Fr. Bob actively promote

Catholicism within the dorm, as well as in the Holy Cross community at large. She shared, "I look forward to seeing him execute that same leadership on a larger scale."

Recently, Father Bob gave a talk at Sorin College, which O'Malley thinks demonstrates how Father Bob outwardly displays his Catholic faith. She said his words show "a profound connection to Catholicism," as well as expressing faith as a "guiding force in his daily life." She also commented, "I am confident that Father Dowd will

do an impeccable job as president, prioritizing Notre Dame's Catholic values, education, and the common good."

Elizabeth Mitchell is a freshman studying marketing, theology and constitutional studies. She is also "directionally challenged." Any tips for helping her find her way (or lost water bottle) should be directed to emitche8@nd.edu. Otherwise, she highly recommends St. Anthony.

Extraordinary Ministers

"V is very, very extraordinary" – Nat King Cole

JAMES WHITAKER
Humor Editor

Following the Second Vatican Council and its implementation, the Church has allowed for extraordinary ministers of communion, which are volunteer laity deputized by the ordinary minister of communion to aid in distributing the Eucharist on account of a particularly large congregation or shortage of ordinary ministers. But now, in a frenzy of democratization under the banner of "the priesthood of the baptized," the Synodal Synod of Synodality has synodically extended this same license to all sacraments.

While the sacraments of marriage and baptism remain

relatively unaffected by this, the faithful have been struggling to figure out what exactly this means for the rest of Church life. There was great discomfort this week in the Diocese of Winona-Rochester as Bishop Barron, preoccupied with recording something for Word on Fire, had to miss the ordination of his priests. Instead, he sent layman Brandon Vogt to ordain the new priests in his stead. When the *Rover* approached Vogt for comment, he said, "It's more valid than the Dutch touch," with a wink.

Perhaps one of the more concerning trends is that of the extraordinary ministers of absolution. Given the long lines in the Basilica for confession, certain priests have been recruiting laity to relieve them

of their duties. After offering a general confession, the priest goes back home while the penitents enter the confessionals to receive their penances from whomever the priest tapped. If one is lucky, he will get a seminarian who can offer some thoughtful penance and counsel. Many are less fortunate.

The *Rover* surveyed 200 undergraduates who had been to confession with an extraordinary minister, and we were able to note certain trends in the students' responses based on the kind of layperson offering their penance.

The undergraduate men have proven likely to assign penances along the lines of physical challenges, usually substituting prayer for the FitnessGram™ PACER Test. This has had the

unfortunate effect of igniting personal competitions, leading men to sin more for another chance to compete.

Certain professors, especially in the week before the add/drop deadline, have attempted to fill their less popular electives with students sent straight from the confessional. Solomon Duane, currently enrolled in "History of Food II: History of Silverware," has been vocal about his frustration with this kind of penance.

Perhaps the most popular kind of extraordinary confessors are the young nieces and nephews of C.S.C. priests. Some penitents have received such laissez-faire penances as "go have a milkshake," "take a nap," and "give me a high-five." However, others are slightly

more difficult to complete, such as "give me all your money" or "I want you to bring me a horse, please." After receiving an especially tough penance ("Go to the moon"), William Smith remarked, "I will never sin again. I literally can't afford it."

James Whitaker is a graduate student with the Theology department and an extraordinary minister of the Anointing of the Sick. If you would like him to douse you with Trader Joe's Avocado Oil before your next major surgery, request his services at jwhitak5@nd.edu.



It behooves a watchdog to bark. Good, Rover.

Compline

for the Feast of Candlemas

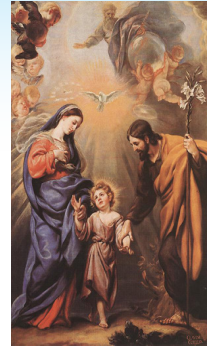


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